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Thesis

THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE POETRY OF EMILY DICKINSON

Submitted by

Muriel Minty Moore

(B.R.E. Boston university, 1928)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE POETRY OF EMILY DICKINSON

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PART I: "THE BACKGROUND OF EMILY DICKINSON'S THOUGHT."

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THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE POETRY OF EMILY DICKINSON

Chapter I: Emily Dickinson's Background

A. Orientation:

The quest for knowledge of God has absorbed the interest of men throughout the ages. In the very nature of our being there seems to be an urge, try as we may to stifle it, which drives us on to seek some understanding of, some comradeship with the great One or Principle which is behind our universe. It is true that many men today are trying to make themselves believe that God is unnecessary, worn-out, old fashioned; that religion is no longer needed by this enlightened civilization; and that faith in spiritual values is an ancient defense mechanism set up by preceding generations who either did not know enough or have courage enough to stand upon their own feet and accept the world as it is. More and more often we hear the cry of such men, "Eat, drink, and be merry. To be sure to-morrow you may die, but do not let that worry you. Take the things the world has to offer, and do not spoil your good time by wondering how those things came here or how long they are going to last." ¹

Other men sound a different note, "Live nobly," they say. "Be as fine as you know how to be, but do not rely on any God to help you along or to give your life meaning. Accept what you see, and in the greatness of your own mind and heart, overcome!" ²

¹ cf. Lippmann, W. "A Preface to Morals", Part I

² cf. Lippmann, W. "A Preface to Morals", Part II, Chapter IX

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1 cf. Hippmann, W. "A Preface to Mopla", Part I

2 cf. Hippmann, W. "A Preface to Mopla", Part II. Chapter IX

Loud and insistent these calls are--all the louder perhaps because they are endeavoring vainly to submerge a craving which they cannot satisfy. Human nature still needs God. That is why men turn their attentions from the cries of those who advocate living without Him, toward the voices of those who, having put aside old, inadequate conceptions of the Deity, have still retained a religious ideal which is real and satisfying.

Among the voices which affirm the worth and possibility of faith, in spite of changes in thought and custom, there is none that comes to us in a more appealing or irresistible way than the voice of the New England poetess, Emily Dickinson.

Her life is characterized by a religious freedom and faith which ought to have meaning for the many who are seeking to throw off the bonds of worn-out creeds but who see nothing to take their place. Some believed that Emily Dickinson had no religion. She herself said when talking about her family, "They are all religious except me, and address an eclipse every morning whom they call 'their Father'"¹ Certain it is that she did not worship the stern, unyielding God of whom her family stood in awe. She did not worship the dreadful Power that was thundered at her from the Puritan pulpit; but no one who reads her poetry will deny that she was truly spiritual, truly religious.

It is the purpose of this paper to discover and set forth those conceptions of God which have given value to Emily

¹ In a letter to Colonel Higginson published in "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" by Martha Dickinson Bianchi. P.239

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Dickinson's life and works. It is to be hoped that three things may be gained through such a study: first, a deeper appreciation and understanding of the life of Emily Dickinson herself; secondly, a knowledge of the kind of God whom she worshipped and found worthwhile; and thirdly, a recognition of the aid her revelations can give us in our search for spiritual and religious satisfaction.

B. Ancestry:

That Emily Dickinson achieved the unique spirituality which was hers, and expressed it in the original, unrestrained way in which she wrote, seems a mystery when we try to account for her genius by a study of her heredity and early environment.

Mrs. Bianchi in her "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" traces the family back to nine generations in America. The first Dickinson in New England is recorded to have lived in Hadley, Massachusetts, in 1659. The ancestors of whom Mrs. Bianchi speaks were of severe, pious, puritanical types. She says, "Their dignity was of the stiff, reserved type resenting the least encroachment on its individuality in character and privacy in habit--which they insured by conforming handsomely to the sense of their community, the laws of their state and country, and the will of God as expounded from pulpits of the white meeting-house in Hadley and later in Amherst, where the Colonial train of Emily Dickinson's ancestors undeviatingly worshipped." ¹

¹ Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," pp 3,4

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worshipped." 1

Blanch, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," pp 3, 4

Her grandfather was a sincere, devout man who believed in carrying his religion into his everyday life. An indication of his character is seen in a letter which he wrote to his son, Edward, Emily's father, when the boy was in college. He said "Learning and science without morality and religion are like a man without a soul. They probably would do hurt rather than good. No man is a neuter in the world. His actions, his example, his concepts, his motives are all tending either to that which is good or evil."¹ He was noted for his generosity and willingness to aid in any worthwhile enterprise. His name, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, is connected with the establishment of Amherst Academy, Massachusetts, where he and his descendants made their home.²

Edward followed in the footsteps of his father. Mrs. Bianchi pictures him, too, as austere, sedate, dignified, not at all the type of man one would imagine as the father of the girl whose spontaneity and disregard for conventionalities makes such an appeal in a study of her spirituality.

Emily Dickinson's mother was a humble, submissive little woman who quietly performed her household tasks and bowed to the will of her strong-minded husband.³ Between her and Emily there seemed to be even less affinity than existed between Emily and

¹Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 7

².cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" PP.5-7

³.cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 9

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1. Blanchi, Martha Dickinson: "The life and letters of Emily Dickinson" 2. 7
2. cf. Blanchi, Martha Dickinson: "The life and letters of Emily Dickinson" 2. 3-7
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her father.¹ There was very little in her family environment to call forth the talents of Emily Dickinson and yet as Mrs. Bianchi says, "Out of this human stock and precision of living came the little girl whose soul flew up and away like smoke from the high chimneys of her home under the tall pines."²

C. Puritanism:

The soul of Emily Dickinson soared high in spite of those elements of Puritanism in her background and environment which were out of accord with such a spirit. The severity of the religion of her fathers seemed to have very little influence upon Emily's faith.

The Puritan theology of her time was a modified Calvinism. The High Calvinism of the earlier Puritans had not done justice to the truths of the love of God in redemption and his offers of salvation to all. The Calvinism of Emily Dickinson's time developed along the lines laid down by Johnathan Edwards, offered more room for human liberty, moral agency, accountableness and praise and blame.³

The upholders of this New England theology stressed particularly the following points:

1. The sovereignty and righteousness of God.
2. The natural sinfulness of man.
3. The need for salvation through God's grace.³

¹.cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson. "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 9 "their unspoken intimacy went so deep it never came to the surface in words," etc.

².Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 11.

³.cf. Byington, E.H. "The Puritan in England and New England" pp. 328-331

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2. of. Blanchet, Martha Dickinson. "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" p. 11.

3. of. Ryington, E.H. "The Puritan in England and New England" pp. 328-331

4. Obedience to God's will as man's greatest duty.

They conceived of God as a Great Taskmaster whose eagle eye watched ever the poor humans whose work it was to carry out their Sovereign's will. They placed much emphasis on Man's tendency to sin and declared that mortification of sin was one of the central duties of any man who wished to be considered a Christian.¹ As John Cotton says in his famous Puritan Catechism, "Milk for Babes", they believed that "we sinned in Adam and fell with him," and we can only be redeemed by the grace of God through Christ. "Faith," says Cotton, "is a grace of the spirit whereby I deny myself, and believe on Christ for righteousness and salvation".² Because of their deep conviction concerning sin, and the necessity of man's regeneration, if eternal happiness was to be attained, the Puritan ministers stressed again and again the importance of rigorous piety and devotion. They maintained that man must bow in complete submission to God's will and he must express this submission by the strictest self-discipline and self-control. The Puritans were chiefly concerned about the world after death, and their desire to fit themselves for an eternity of happiness rather than one of pain and suffering explains their intense preoccupation with moral issues.³ In no uncertain terms they set forth these doctrines and fiercely denounced those who refused to accept them.

1. cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol. X P. 513

2. Byington, E.H.: "The Puritan in England and New England" P.287

3. cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol X pp 513-514

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- 1.-cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol. X p. 513
2. Brinton, E.H.: "The Puritan in England and New England" p. 287
- 3.-cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol X pp 513-514

This type of religion was Emily Dickinson's heritage. Sunday after Sunday she went with her parents to the meeting house in Amherst, a place very likely conforming to Cotton Mather's description of a fitting edifice in which to meet the Lord, "a house for the worship of God, not set off with gaudy, pompous theatrical fineries, but suited unto the simplicity of Christian worship."¹ Here she must have heard of the difficulties of the narrow path to Heaven and of the punishments which awaited those who wandered from the way, but if her spirit drooped at times under the heaviness of such a severe conception of religion, her letters and verses very rarely show it.² One time she wrote ^{as follows} to her "Sister Sue," the girlhood friend who later became the wife of her brother, Austin;

"Sunday--I haven't any paper, dear, but faith continues firm. Presume if I met with my deserts I should receive nothing. Was informed to that effect to-day by a dear Pastor. What a privilege it is to be so insignificant! Thought of intimating that the Atonement was not needed for such atoms!"³

Again she writes,

"The bells are ringing, Susie, North, East, and South and your own village bell and the people who love God are expecting to go to meeting; don't you go, Susie, not to their meeting, but come with me this morning to the church within our hearts, where the bells are always ringing and the preacher

1. Byington, E.H. "The Puritan in England and New England" P. 140

2. cf. letters in Bianchi, Martha Dickinson "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 19, 29, 199, 377.

cf. poems in "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" No. XVII, p.188

3. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" No. C p. 54
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Auntie:

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1. Higginson, E. B. "The Puritan in England and New England" p. 140
2. Cf. letters to Blanchard, Martha Dickinson "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 12, 22, 129, 237.
3. Poems in "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" No. XVII, p. 138
4. Blanchard, Martha Dickinson "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" No. C, p. 24
5. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" No. 22, 29

whose name is Love shall intercede for us. They will all go but me--to the usual meeting house, to hear the usual sermon, the inclemency of a storm so kindly detaining me." 1.

Emily Dickinson's own intuition of God and of religion was the basis of her faith, a faith far removed from the fire and brimstone theology of her day. Perhaps God was a great King, but she was on intimate enough terms with Him to speak of Him as an "old neighbor,"² "a noted clergyman",³ "Papa Above",⁴ and an "adroit Creator",⁵.

Mrs. Bianchi tells of an incident which occurred when Emily Dickinson was just a young woman, which shows clearly her contempt of the Puritan conception of original sin and the necessity for repentance. Her well-intentioned pastor called one afternoon and spoke with her about her soul and her need for repentance and salvation. Emily received him kindly but waived his solicitations aside by declaring that she was unaware of ever having engaged in any quarrel with the Almighty and could see no reason for asking forgiveness. The minister later reported to Mr. Dickinson that his daughter, Emily, seemed different from the ordinary young person and perhaps did not need to go through the usual procedure attendant upon "becoming saved." 6. He must have sensed her essential religion as distinct from religiosity.

1. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson, pp. 20, 30

2. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 197, No. XXXII

3. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 110, No. LVII

4. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 295, No. XCIII

5. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 137, No. CIV

6. cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, Introduction to "Further Poems" pp. X and XI.

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1. Blanchi, Martha Dickinson "The Life and Letters of Emily
Dickinson," pp. 50, 51

2. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 197, No. XXXII
3. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 110, No. LVII
4. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 292, No. XLIII
5. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 127, No. CII
6. Dr. Blanchi, Martha Dickinson, Introduction to "The Poems of Emily Dickinson," pp. X and XI.

Puritanism had many elements of good in it and doubtless-ly it developed a high type of religious character, but its "cardinal error lay in a narrow conception of God as the God of righteousness alone and not as also the God of joy and beauty and intellectual light".¹ Emily Dickinson sensed this and undermined the evil by daring to be herself, by enriching and creating a religious attitude in which her wisdom and vitality and poetry and even comedy could have a place.² Her God was a God of joy and light, of whom she need not be in dread, whose favor she need not try to gain by lengthy prayers for forgiveness or long hours of meditation. In the experience of her own soul with her Creator and not in the knowledge of Him which others tried to give her, she found her God. Out of her willingness to accept the meanings of life and eternity as they were revealed to her own inner nature, comes much of the strength of her spirit. Her religiousness has meaning for us because we feel its genuineness.

"While to her family religion was a sad and solemn duty, preparing them for death and presided over by a dread and awful Majesty, whose wrath was to be appeased by dreary observance and repeated incantations to remove the curse left by Adam hanging over their innocent and timorous heads--to Emily it was not so at all."³

¹"Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" P. 515, quoted from Dowden's "Puritan and Anglican."

² cf. ²Weymberg, Alfred, "Our Singing Strength" p. 196

³ Bianchi, Martha Dickinson "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" p. 97

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him which others tried to give her, she found her God. But of
her willingness to accept the meanings of life and eternity as
they were revealed to her own inner nature, comes much of the
strength of her spirit. Her religiousness has meaning for us
because we feel its genuineness.

"While to her faith religion was a sad and solemn duty,
greeting them for death and presiding over by a dead and silent
majesty, whose wrath was to be appeased by dreary observance
and repeated incantations to remove the curses left by Adam
hanging over their innocent and timorous heads--to Emily it was
not so at all."

1. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 10, quoted from London's
"Princeton and England."
2. Cf. "Theology," Alfred, "Our Living Strength" p. 126
3. Blanche, "The Life and Letters of Emily
Dickinson" p. 37

"--she certainly never considered God her judge or her enemy--. She was a part of God, and God was in her so truly that no outward effort was necessary nor was it possible to exaggerate the harmony between the Creator and His Created child. The adjustment was never broken. She would have spoken to God more simply than to her honorable parent--with less constraint; would have been quite capable of offering God her sweetest flower or her frailest fern, sure of His acceptance."¹

D. A Sequestered Life:

Emily Dickinson was born on December 11, 1830 in the old brick house in Amherst which was destined to be her dwelling place until her death in May, 1886. Although it is very probable that her parents could not understand their child's unconventional ideas, they did not try to check the growth of her personality. Her childhood and girlhood, spent in the company of her sister Lavinia and her brother, Austin, and other children of the neighborhood, seems to have been happy and joyous. She grew as other girls of her time, attending public school, taking piano lessons, walking through the fields in search of flowers for her herbarium, and showing an interest in the happenings of her village.²

At the age of seventeen she was sent to the South Hadley Female Seminary where she was instructed in all the subjects and ways of conduct which were considered most proper for the New

¹ Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 96, 97.

² cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 12-17.

"--she certainly never considered God her judge or her
enemy--. She was a part of God, and God was in her as truly
that no outward effort was necessary nor was it possible to
exaggerate the intimacy between the Creator and his creature
child. The adjustment was never broken. She would have spoken
to God more simply than to her honorable parent--with less con-
straint; would have been quite capable of offering God her
sacred flower of her freest love, sure of his acceptance."

2. A God-gifted life:

Emily Dickinson was born on December 11, 1830 in the old
brick house in Amherst which was destined to be her dwelling
place until her death in May, 1862. Although it is very
probable that her parents could not understand their child's un-
conventional ideas, they did not try to check the growth of her
personality. Her childhood and girlhood, spent in the company
of her sister Lavinia and her brother, Austin, and other children
of the neighborhood, seems to have been happy and typical. She
gave as other girls of her time, attending public school, taking
rich lessons, walking through the fields in search of flowers
for her notebook, and showing an interest in the workings of
her village.

At the age of seventeen she was sent to the South Hadley
Female Seminary where she was instructed in all the subjects and
ways of conduct which were considered most proper for the New

1. Eliot, Walter Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of Emily
Dickinson" pp. 26, 27.
2. Eliot, Walter Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of
Emily Dickinson" pp. 12-13.

England young ladies of her time. She enjoyed her stay here for the most part, yet she was often exasperated by rules and regulations which seemed a hindrance to the expression of her independent spirit. For example, there is the note of impatience at being so shut away from the world, which we find in a letter written to her brother, Austin.

"Please tell me," she says, "who the candidate for President is! -- I know no more about the affairs of the outside world here than if I were in a trance. Was the Mexican War terminated? Is any nation about to besiege South Hadley?"¹

When Emily was in her early twenties, after she had finished her work at the Seminary, she went on a visit with her father to Washington and Philadelphia. While on this trip she met with an experience which influenced all the rest of her life. Much has been written concerning her love for a man, already married whom she is reported to have met in Philadelphia, and much has been said of her retiring from the world because of her experience there. A new book has just been published which aims at disclosing the identity of the person who was the object of Emily Dickinson's affection.²

Some of her followers think it was the husband of her friend, Helen Hunt, whom she loved. Others say it was a young minister named Wadsworth. Mrs. Bianchi in her preface to "Further Poems"³ suggests that it was the minister, and even implies that Emily's poems reflect the influence of his preaching. The subject is

¹ Bianchi, Martha Dickinson "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 26

² Pollett, J. "Emily Dickinson, The Human Background of Her Poetry"

³ "Further Poems" pp XVI - XVIII

England young ladies of her time. She enjoyed her stay here for the most part, yet she was often exasperated by rules and regulations which seemed a hindrance to the expression of her independent spirit. For example, there is the rule of independence at being so shut away from the world which we find in letters written to her brother, Austin.

"I have told me," she says, "who the candidate for President

is -- I know no more about the affairs of the outside world

here than if I were in a trance. And the Mexican War notwithstanding

is my nation about to besiege South America!

When Emily was in her early twenties, after she had finished

her work at the Seminary, she went on a visit with her father

to Washington and Philadelphia. While on this trip she met

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Some of her followers claim it was the husband of her friend,

John Hunt, whom she loved. Others say it was a young minister

named Wadsworth. Mrs. Blunt in her preface to "Emily Dickinson's

suggests that it was the minister, and even farther that Emily's

poems reflect the influence of his preaching. The subject is

1 Blunt, Martin Dickinson "The Life and Letters of Emily

Dickinson" p. 23

2 Poole, J. "Emily Dickinson, The Human Background of Her

Poetry"

3 "Familiar Poems" pp. 141 - 141

not closely connected with the thought of this paper, yet it has interest for us in the fact that such an experience seems to have added a deep note to Emily Dickinson's poetry and to have brought her nearer to that Source of Power and Love which is greater than human. One who wrote of her said of this Philadelphian experience, "There was a moment's struggle between passion and what for her was spiritual duty. Duty won. And Emily virtually retired from the world, to alchemize her love into a mystically poetic reality, and to give utterance to it--through the medium of mystic poetry of a peculiarly precious and unique sort."¹

Emily Dickinson's life was secluded and quiet after this. Much of her time was spent in the solitude of her own garden and room - yet her world was wide, for her spirit was unlimited. Only a few people glimpsed the wondrous magnitude of this poet's soul. She did not have many close friends, yet for those who were dear to her she had a great and intense affection. She writes,

² "I know lives I could miss
Without misery
Others--whose instant's wanting
Would be eternity."

Of all her friends, her brother's wife, "Sister Sue" was the one who most fully shared and appreciated the overflowing of Emily's spirit. In her comradeship with Sister Sue and Sister Sue's children, Emily Dickinson found the greatest happiness.

¹ Hutchison, P. in a review of Miss Pollitt's book in "The New York Times Book Review" February 23, 1930 P. 5

² "Further Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 163

not closely connected with the thought of this report, yet it has interest for us in the fact that such an independent source to have added a deep note to Emily Dickinson's poetry and to have brought her nearer to the sources of love and love which is greater than human. One who wrote of her said of this Philadelphia experience, "There was a woman's struggle between passion and what for her was spiritual duty. Love was and Emily virtually retired from the world, to withdraw her love into a mystically poetic reality, and to give witness to it--through the medium of poetic poetry of a peculiarly personal and unique sort."

Emily Dickinson's life was secluded and quiet after this. Much of her time was spent in the solitude of her own garden and room - yet her world was wide, for her spirit was unlimited. Only a few people glimpsed the wonderful depths of this poet's soul. She did not have many close friends, yet for those who came near to her she had a great and intense affection. One writes,

"I know I love I ought also

Without alloy

Others--whose instinct's swelling

Would be eternally."

Of all her friends, her brother's wife, "Aunt Sue" was the one who most fully shared and appreciated the overflowing of Emily's spirit. In her comradeship with Susan she was sister. Sue's children, Emily Dickinson found the greatest happiness.

1. Hutchinson, F. in a review of *Emily Dickinson's* book in *The New York Times Book Review*, February 22, 1930, p. 2.
2. "The House of Emily Dickinson," p. 103.

Of those persons with whom she came in contact outside of her family circle, Emily prized most highly her friendships with Helen Hunt Jackson, Maria Whitney, Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Holland, and Colonel Higginson to whom she sent several of her poems for publication.¹

As the years went by, Emily led a more and more secluded life. At times she refused to see the friends who called upon her. More and more hours she spent alone with her flowers or her books or her work. Her seclusion and her mystery, though, are not so important as her poetry. As Stanley Braithwaite put it in an article which he wrote for the Boston Transcript at one time. "Her spirit was in those dazzling fragments soaring beyond the rim of shadowy Amherst, to become a spiritual pillar of fire. Why do we not strive to follow that pillar of fire, instead of hanging with morbid curiosity around the dwelling of a woman who once had a love affair which was refused the sanction of law and morality, and because of it immolated herself."

Just what those elements in Emily Dickinson's personality were which enabled her work "to become a spiritual pillar of fire," it is hard to determine. What she once said of nature is applicable to her own life.

"To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her know her less
The nearer her they get".²

¹. cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 76, 86

²"Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 133 No. XCVI

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Just what those elements in Emily Dickinson's personality were which enabled her work "to become a spiritual pillar of life," it is hard to determine. What she once said of nature is applicable to her own life.

"To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her know her less
The nearer they get."²

¹ Cf. Blanchet, *Maria Dickinson*, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 78, 86
² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, E. 125, No. XCVI

Perhaps this very elusiveness draws us as seekers of spiritual values to her side, for in it we sense an eternal quality which we do not find in natures more easily understood. I think, however, we can distinguish four salient traits which must have accounted in part for her spiritual genius. These are:

1. Individualism
2. Optimism
3. Sensitiveness to nature
4. Naiveté

One of the most outstanding of these traits is her individuality. Her own soul was her guide.

"The soul unto itself
Is an imperial friend,--
Or the most agonizing spy
An enemy could send.

Secure against its own,
No treason it can fear;
Itself its sovereign of itself
The soul should stand in awe." 1

She was not afraid of herself. She knew her limitations. 2. She knew her power too, and fearlessly she flung out in poetic form the great things which she found within herself.

Emily Dickinson worshipped the God she did, and worshipped Him in the way she did because her own nature prompted her to do so.

1. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 25, No. XLI
2. cf. "Further Poems" pp. 16, 33, 122

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2. Optimism

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Or the most agonizing spy

An enemy could send.

Secure against its own,

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She was not afraid of herself. She knew her limitations. She
knew her power too, and fearlessly she flung out in poetic
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Emily Dickinson worshipped the God she did, and worshipped
him in the way she did because her own nature prompted her to do

If it is true, as Hocking says, that the chief characteristic of a religious nature is a fearless and original valuation of things,¹ then surely Emily Dickinson is religious.

Optimism and courage are traits which add a note of joy to the religion of Emily Dickinson. There is a brightness and vivaciousness, almost an audaciousness, about her which shows itself in many delightful ways. Many of her poems fairly scintillate with little points of gaiety and humor. This touching of things with a light, deft hand has its bearing upon Emily Dickinson's conception of God. It makes Him seem less awful, less mysterious, more like a friend with whom one may enjoy moments of pleasure as well as hours of seriousness.

Life was serious to Emily Dickinson. It could not always be glossed by touches of delightful satire, and many times her optimism took on a deeper tone.² Pain and suffering have poignant meaning for her, yet she rises above them, triumphant. She says,

"Superiority to fate
Is difficult to learn.
'Tis not conferred by any,
But possible to earn.

A pittance at a time,
Until, to her surprise,
The soul with strict economy
Subsists till Paradise"³

¹ Hocking, W.E. "The Meaning of God in Human Experience" P. 28

² cf. "Further Poems" pp. 66, 106, 108

³ "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 48 No. LXXXV

It is true, as Hocking says, that the chief characteristic

of a religious nature is a fearless and original vision of

things, when merely daily business is religious.

Religion and courage are the same thing, says Hocking.

The religion of Emily Dickinson. There is a brightness and

vision, a sense of the infinite, a sense of the eternal, a sense

of the very depths of things. Her poetry is a vision of things

seen with little points of light and humor. This touching

of things with a light, that has been the poetry of Emily

Dickinson's conception of God. It makes him seem less real,

less mysterious, more like a friend with whom one may enjoy

moments of silence as well as hours of conversation.

Like the religion of Emily Dickinson, it could not allow

be placed by touches of delightful nature, and when these are

optimal took on a deeper tone. It is a religion that is both

most meaning for her, yet the place above her, the infinite.

She says,

"Simplicity is fate

Is difficult to learn.

'Tis not comforted by art,

Not possible to earn.

A distance at a time,

Still, to her surprise,

The soul with silent economy

Substitutes all that is

1 Hocking, J. W. "The Meaning of God in Human Experience," p. 112.

2 Cf. "Poems of Emily Dickinson," pp. 100, 101.

3 "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 100, 101.

She took life as she found it, and accepted it heroically.

"Earth would have been too much, I see,
And heaven not enough for me;
I should have had the joy
Without the fear to justify,--
The palm without the Calvary,
So, Saviour, crucify."1

Always she tried to keep her face toward the light. With touching winsomeness she wrote to a friend.

"My head aches a little and my heart a little more, so, taking me collectively, I seem quite miserable, but I'll give you the sunny corners, and you mustn't look at the shade."2

Always her spirit strove to soar above the sorrows of her life, and usually it triumphed. Her courage is a strong point in her religious nature and an indication of her trust in the Eternal.

A third trait which must have helped Emily Dickinson acquire her often expressed intimacy with the Creator of the universe was her acute sensitiveness to all of nature. In the flowers, in the sunset, in the wind, in the ways of birds and bees she found a spirit akin to her own. For her, nature was vibrant, real, living. With intense emotion she cries out, "O matchless earth, we underrate the chance to dwell in thee."

¹"Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 29

² Quoted by Bradford, G. in article called "Portraits of American Women", Atlantic Monthly, August 1919 Vol.CXXIV P.222

She took life as she found it, and accepted it heroically.

"But I would have been too much, I see,

And never not enough for me;

I should have had the joy

Without the least to justify."

The pain about the delivery,

So, delivery, exactly."

Always she tried to keep her face toward the light. With

touching witnessess she wrote to a friend.

"My head aches a little and my heart a little more, so,

taking me collectively, I need quite miserable, but I'll give

you the many thanks, and you mustn't look at the shadow."

Always her spirit strove to soar above the sorrows of her

life, and nobly it triumphed. Her courage is a strong point

in her religious nature and an indication of her trust in the

Eternal.

A third trait which must have helped Emily Dickinson

endure her often agonized illness with the grace of the

universe was her acute sensitiveness to all of nature. In the

flowers, in the sunset, in the wind, in the ways of birds and bees

she found a spirit akin to her own. For her, nature was vibrant.

Real, living. With intense emotion she cried out, "O mysterious

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"Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson," p. 29

Quoted by Bradford, O. in article called "Portraits of American
Women," Atlantic Monthly, August 1918 Vol. CXXIV, p. 222

All the wonder of the spring, all the beauty of the summer, all the color of the fall, and the solemnity of winter,¹ touched deeply her sensitive nature and brought forth responses which were often, "too deep for tears". This harmony with nature is an essential part of her religion.

Another characteristic of Emily Dickinson's which seems to pervade her whole personality is a certain quality of naiveté. She seems to have a gift for uttering the most profound spiritual truths with a beautiful directness and simplicity. For instance she writes,

"Take all away
The only thing worth larceny
Is left--the Immortality." 2

and

"I hope that nothing pains you except the pang of
life, sweeter to bear than to omit." 3

In the same mood she says,

"The small heart cannot break. The ecstasy of its
penalty solaces the large". 4

Again, how succinctly she states,

"That Love is all there is,
Is all we know of Love;
It is enough, the freight should be
Proportioned to the groove." 5

¹ cf. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" pp. 80 No. IX; 114 No. LXII;
124 LXXX; 125, LXXXII

² Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 350

³ Bianchi, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 350

⁴ Bianchi, "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 63

⁵ "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 303 No. CXII

Her amazing insight into the meaning of life and death, her comprehension of the heights of spiritual ecstasy, and her knowledge of the deepest of human feelings, are all given expression with a spontaneity and seeming lack of effort which is as surprising as it is effective. Hers is the simplicity which is a symbol of the child spirit, and this is interesting in a study of her idea of God, for it shows her as a possessor of that quality which Jesus suggested was normative for true spiritual life when he said, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven." ¹

With this discussion of the personality traits of Emily Dickinson, we bring to a close the chapter which deals with those elements in her heredity, early training, life and environment which might have bearing on her expressions concerning God and religion. We are now ready to consider the actual conceptions of God which she set forth in her poetry.

¹ Matthew 18: 3

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her comprehension of the heights of spiritual ecstasy, and
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of God which she set forth in her poetry.

Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Poet
The Poet's Poet

In a sense, the religious sentimentality of Emily Dickinson, considered as to religiousness, was not a new thing. Her religiously tinged poetry, which she wrote in her solitude, was a part of the new movement of which Margaret Fuller, Emerson, and Theodore were representatives. Their ideals of free thought and of equality were hers. She strove to realize in her own life the expression of the same philosophy of freedom for which they labored. In her time this ideal of freedom was more or less closely bound up with the system of thought known as "Transcendentalism."

PART II: EMILY DICKINSON'S RELIGION

Transcendentalism, as a religious movement, was a reaction against the religious dogmatism and other religious beliefs which had been proposed to interpret man's spiritual life. It was founded by the American Transcendentalists, who were guided by the idea of the "Over-soul" and the "Divine Spirit." It was a new religion, a new faith, a new way of life. It was a religion of the heart, a religion of the soul, a religion of the spirit. It was a religion of the future, a religion of the world, a religion of the universe. It was a religion of the present, a religion of the moment, a religion of the now. It was a religion of the individual, a religion of the self, a religion of the person. It was a religion of the human, a religion of the mortal, a religion of the finite. It was a religion of the infinite, a religion of the eternal, a religion of the divine. It was a religion of the good, a religion of the beautiful, a religion of the true. It was a religion of the love, a religion of the peace, a religion of the joy. It was a religion of the hope, a religion of the faith, a religion of the charity. It was a religion of the wisdom, a religion of the knowledge, a religion of the understanding. It was a religion of the power, a religion of the strength, a religion of the courage. It was a religion of the honor, a religion of the respect, a religion of the esteem. It was a religion of the glory, a religion of the fame, a religion of the renown. It was a religion of the wealth, a religion of the riches, a religion of the abundance. It was a religion of the poverty, a religion of the need, a religion of the want. It was a religion of the sickness, a religion of the pain, a religion of the suffering. It was a religion of the death, a religion of the mourning, a religion of the grief. It was a religion of the resurrection, a religion of the redemption, a religion of the salvation. It was a religion of the heaven, a religion of the paradise, a religion of the bliss. It was a religion of the hell, a religion of the damnation, a religion of the punishment. It was a religion of the angels, a religion of the saints, a religion of the martyrs. It was a religion of the prophets, a religion of the seers, a religion of the visionaries. It was a religion of the poets, a religion of the writers, a religion of the artists. It was a religion of the philosophers, a religion of the scientists, a religion of the scholars. It was a religion of the teachers, a religion of the students, a religion of the learners. It was a religion of the leaders, a religion of the followers, a religion of the disciples. It was a religion of the masters, a religion of the servants, a religion of the slaves. It was a religion of the lords, a religion of the ladies, a religion of the gentlemen. It was a religion of the kings, a religion of the queens, a religion of the emperors. It was a religion of the popes, a religion of the bishops, a religion of the priests. It was a religion of the monks, a religion of the nuns, a religion of the friars. It was a religion of the hermits, a religion of the recluses, a religion of the ascetics. It was a religion of the mystics, a religion of the visionaries, a religion of the prophets. It was a religion of the saints, a religion of the martyrs, a religion of the heroes. It was a religion of the angels, a religion of the spirits, a religion of the demons. It was a religion of the gods, a religion of the goddesses, a religion of the deities. It was a religion of the devils, a religion of the devils, a religion of the devils. It was a religion of the devils, a religion of the devils, a religion of the devils.

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PART II: EMILY DICKINSON'S RELIGION

Chapter II: A Protest Against Ascetic Transcendentalism.

A. Tenets of Transcendentalism

In a discussion of the religious conceptions of Emily Dickinson, consideration of the philosophical trends of her time must be given a place. Perhaps Emily Dickinson did not realize it, but her spirit was certainly at one with the tendency which endeavored to break away from Puritanic determinism. She was a part of the same movement of which Margaret Fuller, Emerson, and Thoreau were representatives. Their ideals of freer development of personality were hers. She strove to realize in her own life and express in her poems the same philosophy of freedom for which they labored. In her time this ideal of freedom was more or less closely bound up with the system of thought termed "Transcendentalism".

Transcendentalism in England, under Carlyle and Coleridge represented a reaction against Sensationalism and other philosophical tendencies which proposed to interpret man's spirit as ultimately matter.¹ It was affirmed by the transcendentalists that man possessed in his own being capacities for recognizing things spiritual, and abilities for knowing supersensible realities, which enabled him to transcend the ordinary world of matter and go beyond the ordinary experience of the senses. "Transcendentalism affirms," one writer states, "that the soul creates all things -- man, the universe, all forms, all changes; and this power is possessed by each individual soul. ---- We should strive to disentangle our-

¹ cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol XII pp 421, 422

A. Tenets of Transcendentalism

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¹ cf. "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol XII pp 421, 422

selves from the world of matter, from bonds of space and time that we may take our stand at once in the Over-soul which we are, did we but know it."¹ This sense of the supernaturalness of the natural man is the keynote of the transcendental philosophy.

In Europe this belief was confined almost wholly to philosophers, educators and men in the literary field. In New England, its implications influenced the daily existence of its people. The coming of political independence made Americans feel confident in their ability to set up a society for themselves; and a "philosophy that laid its foundations in human nature, and placed stress on the organic capacities and endowments of the mind" was most congenial to the New World. "Every native New Englander was at heart, whether he suspected it or not, radically and instinctively a disciple of Fichte or Schelling, of Cousin or Jouffroy".² Transcendentalism in New England is defined as "practically,--an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically,---an assertion of the immanence of divinity in instinct, the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind".³ The most important tenets of New England transcendentalism seem to be

1. Human personality has value and worth
2. The soul is free
3. Man is essentially spiritual
4. The ideal and invisible ~~are~~ real
5. God and immortality are apprehensible for man through man's own inner experiences.

¹ Greene, W.B.: Transcendentalism p. 16, 17.

² cf. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" pp. 105-107 direct quotations P. 107.

³ Frothingham, "Transcendentalism in New England" p. 136.

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In Europe this belief was confined almost wholly to philosophers, educators and men in the literary field. In New England, its implications influenced the daily existence of its people.

The coming of political independence made Americans feel confident in their ability to set up a society for themselves; and a philosophy that laid its foundations in human nature, and placed stress

on the organic capacities and endowments of the mind was most congenial to the New World. "Every native New Englander was at heart, whether he suspected it or not, radically and instinctively a

disciple of Fichte or Schelling, of Cousin or Jouffroy." Transcendentalism in New England is defined as "practically,--an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically,--an assertion of

the immanence of divinity in nature, the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind." The most important tenets of New England transcendentalism seem to be

1. Human personality has value and worth

2. The soul is free

3. Man is essentially spiritual

4. The ideal and invisible are real

5. God and immortality are apprehensible for man through

man's own inner experience.

1 Greene, W.B.: Transcendentalism p. 16, 17.

2 Cf. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" pp. 103-107 direct quotations p. 107.

3 Frothingham, "Transcendentalism in New England" p. 138.

The regard for human personality expressed itself in a tolerant spirit towards all types of men and thought, and in an emphasis on self-culture and self-development. An indication of this regard is the fact that women were encouraged to seek equal rights with men and were recognized as intellectually and spiritually as capable as man.¹ The Brook Farm experiment was established on the principle of freedom for all in intellectual and cultural pursuits. It is an example of the belief in the freedom of the soul. Man's spirituality was stressed again and again by preachers and writers of the transcendental faith.² Here are some sentences from William Channing:

"We have, each of us, the spiritual eye to see, the mind to know, the heart to love, the will to obey God."

"The great lesson is, that there is in human nature an element truly Divine, and worthy of all reverence; that the Infinite which is mirrored in the outward universe, is yet more brightly imaged in the inward spiritual world."³

Concerning the reality of the ideal and invisible, Emerson gives this view of the Transcendentalist: "He believes in miracles, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration and ecstasy."⁴

Man's apprehension of God was a favorite subject with transcendental writers. Theodore Parker says: "The germs of religion, both the germs of religious principle and religious sentiment, must be born in man. I reckon that man by nature is

¹ cf. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" - concerning Margaret Fuller, pp. 177-179, 285-300.

² cf. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England", pp 117, 135, 144, 145.

³ Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" p. 113

⁴ Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" p. 127

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religious----The existence of God is a fact given in our nature.---
And as the sensation of hunger presupposes food to satisfy it,
so the dependence on God presupposes his existence and character."¹

B. Emerson and Emily Dickinson:

There is much in the life and works of Emily Dickinson which seems to coincide with the spirit expressed in the foregoing tenets of transcendentalism. Writers have often compared her to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is considered the greatest exponent of the transcendental principles in New England. Kreymborg in "Our Singing Strength"² says she is "comparable with Emerson in her intoxicated independence." Both believed in the freedom of the soul. Both of them chafed under any restraint which tended to quell the soaring of their spirit. "We wish" said Emerson, "to put the ideal rules into practice, to offer liberty instead of chains".³

In many of Emily Dickinson's poems we find this same emphasis on liberty. In a mood of exasperation she says,

"Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.
'Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur,- you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain."⁴

¹ Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" P. 126

² Kreymborg, A. "Our Singing Strength" P. 201

³ Frothingham, O.B. "Transcendentalism in New England" P. 225 -

⁴ "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 9 No. XI

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⁴ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 9 No. XI

Again and again she emphasizes the soul's right to its own development. She says,

"There is a solitude of space,
A solitude of sea,
A solitude of death, but these
Society shall be,
Compared with that profounder site,
That polar privacy,
A soul admitted to Itself:
Finite Infinity."¹

Another illustration of this emphasis is found in the volume of "Further Poems"

"Growth of Man like growth
Of nature
Gravitates within,
Atmosphere and sun confirm it
But it stirs alone."

Each its difficult ideal
Must achieve itself,
Through the solitary prowess
Of a silent life".²

This emphasis on freedom of the spirit makes both Emerson and Emily Dickinson enemies of form, and dogma and doctrine. Again Kreyborg says, "Walt and Emily, along with Forefather

¹ "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 265 No. XXV

² Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 16

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and Emily Dickinson analogues of love, and dogma and doctrine.

Again Freyborg says, "Self and Emily, along with Forefather

1 "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 285 No. XXV

2 Further Poems of Emily Dickinson p. 16

Emerson, are the great American rebels."¹ Emerson was forced to give up his position as a Christian minister because he refused to administer the rites of the Lord's Supper because he felt that it was mere form. The following statements appear in his last sermon to his congregation:

"To eat bread is one thing; to love the precepts of Christ and resolve to obey them is quite another."

"To adhere to one form a moment after it is out-grown is unreasonable, and it is alien to the spirit of Christ."

"What I revere and obey in it (Christianity) is its reality, its boundless charity, its deep interior life, the rest it gives to my mind, the echo it returns to my thoughts, the perfect accord it makes with my reason through all its representation of God and His Providence; and the persuasion and courage that come out thence to lead me upward and onward. Freedom is the essence of this faith. Its institutions, then, should be as flexible as the wants of men. That form out of which life and suitableness have departed, shall be as worthless in its eyes as the dead leaves that are falling around us."

"The Pagan was a religion of forms; it was all body--it had no life--and the Almighty God was pleased to qualify and send forth a man to teach men that they must serve him with the heart; that only that life was religious which was thoroughly good; that sacrifice was smoke, and forms were shadows."²

Emily Dickinson echoes this impatience of forms and dogmas.

¹ Kreymsborg, A: "Our Singing Strength" P. 193-194

² Frothingham, O.B. "Transcendentalism in New England" pp. 337-379

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¹ Freyberg, A: "Our Singing Strength" p. 193-194

² Dickinson, E.B. "Transcendentalism in New England" pp. 337-379

"Some keep the Sabbath going to church;

I keep it staying at home,

With a bobolink for a Chorister,

And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;

I just wear my wings,

And instead of tolling the bell for church,

Our little sexton sings.

God preaches,--a noted clergyman,--

And the sermon is never long;

So instead of getting to heaven at last,

I'm going all along!"¹

In this same mood of rebellion against set doctrines and traditionally established beliefs she cries,

"We prate to Heaven

We prate of Heaven--

Relate when neighbors die,

At what o'clock to Heaven

They fled.

Who saw them wherefore fly?

Is Heaven a place, and Sky a face?

Location's narrow way

Is for ourselves;

Unto the Dead

There's no geography."²

1 "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P 110 No. LVII

2 "Further Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 48

Another point of resemblance between these two upholders of freedom and sponsors of soul-development is their seeming fondness for solitude. Emerson says of the transcendentalists, and it applies to his own life as well as to others, "They are lonely; the spirit of their writing and conversation is lonely; they repel influences; they shun general society; they incline to shut themselves in their chamber in the house; to live in the country rather than in town; and to find their tasks and amusements in solitude."¹ This retirement from the world of everyday affairs was not, Emerson declares, the result of mere whim or the result of unwillingness to share in social relationships, but was an action compatible with the temperaments and principles of those who sought the spiritual as over against the material.² Emerson is accused by one of his friends as being too impersonal or discreet, "as if he feared the least intrusion of himself were an offense offered to self-respect, the courtesy due to intercourse and authorship."³

Retirement was sought by Emerson and his followers because they felt that only by thus shutting themselves away from the world could they have opportunity to strive for what seemed to them higher and greater values than could be realized in a more social atmosphere.

Emily Dickinson's withdrawal from society was also prompted by tendencies in her own nature as well as by circumstances in her life.

1. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" P. 142
2. cf. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" P. 143
3. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" P. 247

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Her own words reecho this idea of the worth attained in a life which seeks and finds in communion with itself what it never can appreciate when lived in close relationships with others.

"There is another loneliness

That many die without,

Not want or friend occasions it,

Or circumstances or lot.

But nature sometimes, sometimes thought,

And whoso it befall

Is richer than could be divulged

By mortal numeral".¹

Mrs. Bianchi attributes Emily's shrinking from society to her whole-souled absorption in the revelations of life which came to her through her own sensitive spirit. "To one who loved her," she says, it is unthinkable that she could ever be supposed to have consciously secreted herself, or self-consciously indulged in whim or extravaganza in living, which her fine breeding would have been the first to discard as vulgar and unworthy. It was her absorption in her own world that made her unaware often of the more visible world of those who never see beyond it. It was not that she was introspective, egoistic, and selfish--rather that she dwelt so far out in the changing beauty of nature, in the loves and joys and sorrows of the dear ones she held closest, in the simple drama of the neighborhood, and most of all the stupendous and sometimes revealing wonder of life and death and the Almighty God thundered at her from the high pulpit on Sundays--and known so

¹ "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 262 No. XVIII

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God thundered at her from the high pulpit on Sundays--and known so

differently in her own soul the other days of the week--that she never thought of Emily Dickinson at all; never supposed any one watched her way of living or worshipping or acting. She never had time in all the vivid, thrilling, incessant programme of night and day, summer and winter, bird and flower, the terror lest evil overtake her loved ones, the glory in their least success--never stopped in her flying wild hours of inward rapture over a beauty perceived or a winged word caught and spun into the fabric of her thought--to wonder or care if no one knew she was, or how she proceeded in the behavior of her own small tremendous affair of life."¹

One other characteristic seems to be a part of the thought of both Emily Dickinson and Emerson, namely, a strong assurance that the unexplored, invisible and spiritual is an experiential and discernible reality. In all of life Emerson sees the action of the great, eternal One of which every human soul is a part. Man knows he is a part of this Infinite Mind because he can discern supernatural things. "We are all discerners of spirits. That diagnosis lies aloft in our life or unconscious power".² Because man himself is partly spiritual he recognizes the Great Spirit or Mind in all the universe. Emerson writes of the Eternal One.

"He is the essence that inquires;
He is the axis of the star;
He is the sparkle of the spar;
He is the heart of every creature;
He is the meaning of each feature;
And his mind is in the sky,
Than all it holds, more deep, more high".

1. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 4,5
2. Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" Quoted from an article of Emerson's P. 239
3. Quoted by Frothingham: "Transcendentalism in New England" - P.241

For those who would see through Emerson's eyes, "the world is full of unconscious witness to the transcendental sense; the transcendental, mystical sense of the Infinite is what gives life its glory and dignity".¹

Emily Dickinson certainly sensed the glory and dignity of the invisible. It might not be apprehensible immediately, or to ordinary sight, but it could be reached.

"Ought of sight? What of that?

See the bird reach it:

Curve on curve, sweep on sweep,

Round the steep air.

Danger! What is that to her?

Better 'tis to fail there

Than debate here.

Blue is blue the world through,

Amber, amber; dew, dew.

Seek friend, and see--

Heaven is sky of earth

That's all--

Bashful Heaven, thy lovers small

Hide too, from thee."²

Of heaven she utters this confident faith,

"I never saw a moor,

I never saw the sea;

Yet know I how the heather looks,

And what a wave must be.

¹ Kuhns, O: "The Sense of the Infinite" P. 263

² Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 66

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given."¹

C. Protest against Transcendentalism:

In her emphasis upon the freedom of the soul, in her rebellion against mere form and traditional doctrine, in her preference for solitude, and in her insistence upon the validity of the spiritual and supernatural, Emily Dickinson shows her kinship with the poetical and imaginative Emerson. However, in some points they do not concur, in spite of the fact that the general tone of their music is harmonious. Although the thought of many of her poems appears to be sympathetic with the fundamental principles of transcendentalism, there were some of its practices and beliefs which she seems not to have shared. There were two tendencies especially which found opposition on the part of Emily Dickinson. The first of these was the unnaturalness of their supernatural emphasis; the second, their love of meditation and contemplation for its own sake.

Emily Dickinson was as much alive to the worth and reality of spiritual existence as the transcendentalists were, but she glimpsed the eternal and invisible in a simple, natural way which made her impatient of the vagueness of the transcendental view. They lived too much in the mysterious. They so far transcended the things of earth that between daily living and the spirit order a

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 188 No. XVII
For other expressions of her belief in the spiritual see "Complete Poems P. 46 No. LXXXII, P. 174 No. XIV, P. 226 No LXXXIII
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chasm was made to exist which Emily's nature could not bridge. Of Emerson, who visited her brother, Austin, at one time, and whom she probably saw, although it is not recorded by Mrs. Bianchi that she ever held conversation with him, she says, "It must have been as if he came from where dreams are born."¹ We do not think that Emily Dickinson made this remark with the intention of any depreciatory implication whatsoever, but it indicates that there was a quality in his thought so far removed from the natural that even she, with all her spiritual acuteness, failed to understand it.

Eternity, immortality, spirituality, God were realities to her, known to her through personal experience. This intuition of them was enough. She saw no need for contemplation of Emerson's abstract primal mind and sensed no necessity for intellectual discussion of man's connection with it.² What Emerson set forth in sedate, philosophical style, Emily poured out in what one writer calls, "clots of fire, shreds of heaven, snatches of eternity"³; yet these "shreds of heaven" have real potency for experiencers of this earth's life. It is interesting to compare the poetry of both in this regard. Emerson writes,

"All the forms are fugitive,
But the substances survive;
Ever fresh the broad creation--
A divine improvisation,
From the heart of God proceeds,
A single will, a million deeds.
Once slept the world an egg of stone,
And pulse and sound, and light was none;

¹ Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" P. 82
² cf. Frothingham, O.B. "Transcendentalism in New England" Pp 238,239.
³ Bradford, G: "Portraits of American Women" in The Atlantic Monthly for August, 1919 Vol. CXXIV

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1 Blanchard, Martha Dickinson: "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" p. 32
2 Cf. Frothingham, O. B. "Transcendentalism in New England" p. 288, 289.
3 Bradford, G. "Portraits of American Women" in The Atlantic Monthly for

And God said 'Throb', and there was motion,
And the vast mass became vast ocean.
Onward and on, the eternal Pan,
Who layeth the world's incessant plan,
Halteth never in one shape,
But forever doth escape,
Like wave or flame, into new forms
Of gem and air, of plants and worms."¹

Emily Dickinson puts a personal emphasis on this idea of spirituality in all things.

"The only news I know
Is bulletins all day
From Immortality.

The only shows I see
Tomorrow and Today,
Perchance Eternity.

The only one I meet
Is God,--the only street
Existence, this traversed.

If other news there be,
Or admirabler show--
I'll tell it you!"²

Of the divine in nature and our inability to sense it she says,

"Nature is what we see,
The Hill, the Afternoon--
Squirrel, Eclipse, the Bumble-bee,
Nay--Nature is Heaven.

¹ Quoted by Frothingham, O.B. "New England Transcendentalism" P. 240

² Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 115

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And the vast mass became vast ocean,
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Of the divine in nature and our inability to sense it she says,
"Nature is what we see,
The Bill, the Afternoon--
Spotterel, Eclipse, the Bumble-bee,
May--Nature is Heaven."

Nature is what we hear,
The Bobolink, the Sea--
Thunder, the Cricket--
Nay,--Nature is Harmony.

Nature is what we know
But have no art to say,
So impotent our wisdom is
To Her simplicity."¹

The directness of Emily Dickinson's style, the personal note in the expression of her conceptions of the invisible world makes us feel with Mrs. Bianchi that "she was at the source of things and dwelt beside the very springs of life, yet those deep wells from which she drew were of the wayside, though their waters were of eternal truth, her magnificent one of the certainties of every immortal being."² " -- of the wayside" is an indication of her refusal to be swept away by the oftentimes vague and visionary spiritual illusions of the followers of the transcendental school. Heights she reached, but always her vivid insight into human nature kept her from wandering too far or aimlessly into the realms of the unseen. Quoting Kreymborg once again, "She was able to see the death in life and life in death, which brought her to so consistent a reference to an immortality happily removed from the glib belief of Longfellowians, or the reasoned rigmarole of the average Transcendentalist".³

The transcendental emphasis upon the supremacy of mind tended to make men meditative and contemplative up to the point of ascetism.

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 269 No. XXXIV

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson: Introduction, P. IX

³ Kreymborg, A.: "Our Singing Strength" P. 195

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So important our wisdom is
To Her simplicity.¹

The directness of Emily Dickinson's style, the personal note in the expression of her conceptions of the invisible world makes us feel with Mrs. Bianchi that "she was at the source of things and dwelt beside the very springs of life, yet those deep wells from which she drew were of the way-side, though their waters were of eternal truth, her magicalist one of the certain-ities of every immortal being."² " -- of the way-side" is an indication of her refusal to be swept away by the oftentimes vague and visionary spiritual illusions of the followers of the transcendental school. Heights she reached, but always her vivid insight into human nature kept her from wandering too far or aimlessly into the realm of the unseen. Quoting Kreyenborg once again, "She was able to see the death in life and life in death, which brought her to an consistent reference to an immortality happily removed from the glib belief of Longfellowians, or the reasoned rigmarole of the average Transcendentalist."³

The transcendental emphasis upon the supremacy of mind tended to make men meditative and contemplative up to the point of asceticism.

1 Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, P. 229 No. XXXIV
2 Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson: Introduction, P. IX
3 Kreyenborg, A.: "Our Singing Strength," P. 195

Emily Dickinson doubtlessly had her moments of quietness and thought. It is probable that she often felt what Rudolf Otto calls "numinous experiences" or moments of awareness of the presence of spirit in the universe.¹ She would have known what he meant by the holy, the awesome, the mysterious in one's communion with the unseen, but she had no sympathy with forced meditation or ascetic actions for their own sake.

Very early in her life she showed her lack of confidence in the efficacy of vigils and fasts. She was at the South Hadley Female Seminary attending school. Miss Lyon, head teacher of the School, believing it her duty to instill the ideals of piety, reverence and self-denial in the lives of her pupils, suggested that Christmas day instead of being considered a holiday should be spent in fasting, reading of the scriptures, and praying. Each girl was to remain in her own room and meditate in solitude upon her spiritual needs. In order to emphasize her suggestion she asked all of those who were sufficiently religious and virtuous, willingly to spend this one day in the interests of their souls, to stand. Emily and her roommate remained seated. The astonished teacher requested all the girls to be seated and then asked that any who still so disregarded the well-being of their eternal souls that they were unwilling to spend the day as she had suggested to arise before all the other pupils. Emily stood alone.²

She was dismissed from the Seminary for a while because of her non-conformance to rules, but this did not shake her independence. Already she had built up for herself an idea of a God who

¹ cf. Otto, R.: "The Idea of the Holy" pp. 1-25

² cf. Bianchi, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" pp. 25,26

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¹ Cf. Otto, R.: "The Idea of the Holy", pp. 1-25.
² Cf. Blumenthal, Martha Dickinson: "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson", pp. 28, 29.

was a God of joy and love, a God who required not fasting or pious contemplation, but a willing spirit and acts of gentleness. Her God, she believed, would rejoice more in the happy hearts of his children than in the prayers which came from feelings of fear and forced reverence. Her dislike of anything which suggested the rigor of asceticism or the bonds of unnatural self-restriction is delightfully expressed in the poem:

"I never felt at home below,
And in the handsome skies
I shall not feel at home
I know,
I don't like Paradise.

Because it's Sunday all the time
And recess never comes,
And Eden 'ill be so lonesome
Bright Wednesday afternoons.

If God could make a visit,
Or ever took a nap--
So not to see us--but they say
Himself a telescope

Perennial beholds us,--
Myself would run away
From Him and Holy Ghost and all--
But--there's the Judgement Day."¹

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 43

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The spiritual satisfaction which the transcendentalists achieved was not living enough for Emily Dickinson. Their God was too far away. She sought Some one more personal, more real, more helpful. Their Deity, found in Contemplation of the universe and life which were parts of Him, discovered through much reasoning about spiritual things, and sensed in the quietness of long meditations, did not find response in her soul. They portrayed almost as negative, and certainly more vague a God than was preached to her from the puritan pulpit. Her religion was a protest against ascetic transcendentalism. She sought a positive, a living, a real God.

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Chapter III: A Search for a Positive Idea of God

A. A Natural rather than a Supernatural God

As Gamaliel Bradford suggests in his article in one of the numbers of the Atlantic Monthly, Emily Dickinson's one great preoccupation was the inner life, God and eternity.¹ A seeking for the spiritual meaning of existence, a striving for a positive idea of God was her everyday toil. The puritanical Judge-God was too awful for her. The transcendental, mystically sensed God was too well enshrouded by intellectual mists. She wanted a God who could speak to her own soul, whom she could discern and know as she knew her friends on earth. Faith was as important to her as to the transcendentalists. Of it she sings,

"Faith is the pierless bridge
Supporting what we see
Unto the scene that we do not,
Too slender for the eye.

It bears the soul as bold
As it were rocked in steel,
With arms of steel
At either side
It joins behind the rail--

To what--could we presume--
The bridge would cease to be--

¹ Bradford, G. "Portraits of American Women" in the Atlantic Monthly for August, 1919 Vol. CXXIV P.225

Chapter III: A search for a Native American

A. A Native American

As a Native American, I am interested in the history of the

of the history of the Native American, and I am interested in the

great preservation was the first step, and the second step

A seeking for the Native American, and the third step, a

for a Native American, and the fourth step, a

Native American, and the fifth step, a

Native American, and the sixth step, a

Native American, and the seventh step, a

Native American, and the eighth step, a

Native American, and the ninth step, a

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

Native American

I am interested in the history of the Native American, and I am interested in the

Native American, and I am interested in the

To our far vacillating feet

A first necessity."¹

And yet she longs for an assurance from her intellect as well as from her heart. She seeks a God whom she is able to respect with her reason while she is reaching out and responding to Him through her emotional faculties. She delicately hints of this in the four lines:

"Faith is a fine invention
For gentlemen who see;
But microscopes are prudent
In an emergency."²

She wants a certain degree of definiteness, even though she cannot abide dogma and set creed. She has no sympathy with mere vagueness. She will not stand for an excrescence of high-sounding words or involved dissertations. How she derides the practitioner of such extravagances! She writes:

"He preached upon 'breadth' till it
argued him narrow,--
The broad are too broad to define;
And of 'truth' until it proclaimed him
a liar,--
The truth never flaunted a sign.

Simplicity fled from his counterfeit presence
As gold the pyrites would shun.

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 129

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 32 No. LVI

to the "Verifying" test

A "test" necessarily.

And yet the focus for an experience from her intellect as well

as from her heart. Her words are those which she is able to use

and with her words while she is reading and re-reading

in the thought for emotional feeling. The feeling which

is this in the "test" itself:

"This is a 'test' situation

for feeling and test;

But what is the test?

Is it necessary?"

She reads a certain degree of feeling, even though she

cannot read the words and feel them. She has no feeling with

new responses. She will not stand for an experience of life-

reading words or feeling the experience. She will not stand for

recognition of such experience; the action

the feeling is "reading" still is

and in the action.

The words are the words in action;

And in "reading" still is feeling the

is the.

The first never finished a step.

And yet, that is the complete message

as with the feeling words also.

I cannot read of feeling the words.

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What confusion would cover the innocent Jesus

To meet so enabled a man!"¹

She sought a God more comparable in personality to the "innocent Jesus" than was the Power in whom, either the pious followers of her ancestral religion, or the upholders of the new mystical emphasis professed belief. Somewhere between these two conceptions she strove to find a satisfying Deity. Oftentimes she was puzzled in her attempt to know her God. We quote an example:

"Victory comes late,
And is held low to freezing lips
Too rapt with frost
To take it.
How sweet it would have tasted,
Just a drop!
Was God so economical?
His table's spread too high for us
Unless we dine on tip-toe.
Crumbs fit such little mouths,
Cherries suit robins;
The eagle's golden breakfast
Strangles them.
God keeps his oath to sparrows,
Who of little love
Know how to starve!"²

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 36 No. LXIV

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 30 No. XII

What a splendid world would be the world of today

if we could only see it as it is.

It is not a bad world, but it is a world of contrasts.

"The world is a stage," says the poet, "and the players are men."

But the players are not the only things on the stage.

There are also the things that are not on the stage.

And these things are the things that make the world what it is.

And these things are the things that we must learn to live with.

And

"What a world it is!"

And a world that is full of life.

And a world that is full of love.

And a world that is full of hope.

And a world that is full of faith.

And a world that is full of peace.

And a world that is full of joy.

And a world that is full of beauty.

And a world that is full of goodness.

And a world that is full of kindness.

And a world that is full of compassion.

And a world that is full of mercy.

And a world that is full of grace.

And a world that is full of love.

And a world that is full of hope.

And a world that is full of faith.

I have seen a world of love and peace.

I have seen a world of hope and faith.

In another poem she cries out in the midst of suffering and failure to understand:

"Of course I prayed--

And did God care?

He cared as much as

On the air

A bird had stamped her foot

And cried "Give me!"

My reason, life

I had not had, but for

Yourself,

'Twere better charity

To leave me in the atom's

Tomb,

Merry and nought, and gay

And numb,

Than this smart misery."¹

In spite of wonderings at times, Emily Dickinson searched on in the spirit of her own immortal words, "Finite to fail, but infinite to venture."² Her soul she would satisfy at the table of the Almighty even if she had to occasionally "dine on tip-toe." Her poetry, much of it, is affirmation of the fact that she came to conceive a God who, to a large extent, satisfied the longings of her soul. That her conception was wide enough to keep

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 44

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 61 No. CXV

In another case the judge said in the midst of reflecting and

believe to understand:

"Of course I prayed--

And did not pray

He said as much as

On the air

A little and thought her food

And when "live with"

is known, like

I had not had, but for

himself,

'I have better clarity

To leave me in the state

Two.

Just one or two, and say

And now,

Then this must mean."

In spite of what was at issue, only thirteen minutes

in the light of his own case, "I have to tell,

and indicate to yourself. For now the world really is the

table of the Almighty even if the last is somewhat "stagnant"

the day. For history, which is it, is a reflection of the past

and even to ourselves a lot of it, is a large extent, "reflected"

longings of our soul. That has something to do with the way to keep

I believe from the history of the world

the history of the world is the history of the world

faith alive amid the varied moods of her nature is indicated by an examination of the different names by which she addresses her God. These names are symbolic of the three elements which seem most observable in her conception of God. I list the names in the three groups as follows:

a. Those which show her belief in a God who is natural rather than supernatural:

1. Sweet Deity - - - Further Poems P. 202
2. A thrifty Deity - - - -Ibid P. 41
3. A Physician - - - Complete Poems P. 27 No.XLVII
4. An Exchequer - - - Ibid
5. An Inquisitor - - - -Ibid p. 7 No. IX
6. An adroit Creator - - - -Ibid p. 137 No. CIV
7. A distant, stately Lover - Further Poems P. 168
8. Papa above - - - -Complete Poems P. 295 No. XCIII

b. Those which deal with God and his universe and reveal Him as immanent rather than transcendent:

9. God - - - -Ibid P. 122 No. LXXVI
10. Creator - - - - Ibid P. 105 XLVIII
11. The White Creator - - - Further Poems P. 4
12. Great Spirit - - - Complete Poems P. 23 No.XXXIX
13. Jehovah - - - - Ibid P. 211 No. LVII
14. Lord - - - - Ibid P. 106 No. XLIX
15. Maker - - - - Ibid P. 50 No. XCII
16. Heaven - - - - Ibid P. 290 No. LXXXIII
17. The Superhuman - - - Further Poems P. 132
18. Artist -- - - - -Complete Poems P. 109 No.LIV

c. Those which reveal God as a God of love rather than a God of law:

19. Curious Friend - - - Further Poems P. 47
20. An old Neighbor - - - Complete Poems P. 197 No. XXXII
21. A noted clergyman - - - -Ibid P. 110 No. LVII
22. (of Christ) a tender Pioneer - Further Poems P. 106
23. Burglar - - - - -Complete Poems P. 201 No. XL
24. Banker - - - - -Ibid
25. Father - - - - -Ibid

To know God by twenty-five such different names must be to know Him well. It is certainly an indication that Emily Dickinson and the Eternal were not strangers to each other.

Having suggested by the above list of names the three most significant elements in Emily Dickinson's conception of God, we will now proceed to take up a more detailed study of each of these elements and show how she expresses them in her poetry.

In the first place, she conceives of God as natural rather than supernatural. She did not have to search the skies for the Divine Companionship. God was always present, with her. In a letter to one of her girlhood friends she wrote, "God is here, looking into my very soul to see if I think right thoughts. Yet I am not afraid----- He looks very gloriously, and everything bright seems dull beside Him."¹ To fear God, and the things we connect God with,--death, life, immortality,--was as unnatural to

¹ Quoted from a letter to Mrs. Strong in "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," by M.D. Bianchi P. 137

2. These which reveal the state of love which was a

good of love

13. Owing to the - - - - -

14. as the - - - - -

15. A noted - - - - -

16. (The artist) a famous - - - - -

17. - - - - -

18. - - - - -

19. - - - - -

The first was by the - - - - -

the - - - - -

The second was not - - - - -

Having suggested by the above list of names the three most

important elements in the artist's composition of the

will now proceed to take up a more detailed study of each of these

elements and show how the artist has been to his work.

In the first place, the question of the artist's

then - - - - -

the - - - - -

later to one of the - - - - -

looking back as we would to see if I think that the artist

I do not think - - - - -

which seems to be the - - - - -

important - - - - -

I quoted from a letter to Mr. Brown in "The artist and his work" by H. H. Munroe, p. 100

her as for her to fear the coming of dawn or sunrise.

"Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?

Not death; for who is he?

The porter of my father's lodge

As much abasheth me.

Of life? 'Twere odd I fear a thing

That comprehendeth me

In one or more existences

At Deity's decree.

Of resurrection? Is the east

Afraid to trust the morn

With her fastidious forehead?

As soon impeach my crown!"¹

God was very near to her, so near that he could read her thoughts, and she could see his shining glory. He was so near that she could see Him smile. When she presented her plea for

"A heaven not so large as yours

But large enough for me"

.

"A smile suffused Jehovah's face;

The cherubim withdrew;

Grave saints stole out to look at me,

And showed their dimples too."²

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 193 No. XXIV

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 24 No. XXXIX

But on the 1st of June, 1861, the following was published:

"Alfred, the son of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

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The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

The father of the late Mr. Alfred."

God was not only near to Emily Dickinson, he was friendly, so friendly that she could address Him and speak of Him as one might of one's most intimate earthly companion. She speaks of her Maker's "cordial visage" and adds the little note of reluctance which seems to be a part of human nature, thus:

"The Maker's cordial visage,
However good to see,
Is shunned, we must admit,
Like an adversity."¹

These lines contain a delightful observation to her Friend above:

"Lightly stepped a yellow star
To its lofty place,
Loosed the Moon her silver hat
From her lustral face.
All of evening softly lit
As an astral hall--
"Father," I observed to Heaven,
"You are punctual."²

The living, human quality which Emily Dickinson assigned to God made her dare to talk of Him in a way which must have seemed unduly humorous and irreverent to her Puritan friends. But Emily was not irreverent. God was so much her friend that she felt He could appreciate and enjoy a little audaciousness now and then even if it seemed at times to reflect upon the way He chose to do things. She means no malice when she says,

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 51 No. XCII

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 279 No. LVIII

and was not only more so than the others, but was

so friendly that she would not only give me a ride

at the end of my ride but would also give me a ride

for the day of my ride, and when I had a ride of a

which seems to be a part of her own ride, she

"The school is a school of the school."

and when I had a ride

to school, she was with me

and when I had a ride

these things are a school of the school, and when I

which seems to be a part of her own ride, she

to the school of the school.

and when I had a ride

from the school of the school.

and when I had a ride

as an school of the school.

"The school is a school of the school."

and when I had a ride

The school is a school of the school, and when I

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

and when I had a ride

"Grant me, O Lord, a sunny mind,
Thy windy will to bear."¹

At times she confesses:

--"I omit to pray,
'Father, thy will be done' to-day,
For my will goes the other way,
And it were perjury!"²

She takes delight in gently chiding her Creator for acts which seem to her unwarranted, but she is not angry or bitter, only pleasingly frank about her opinions. The three poems that follow suggest her unreserved attitude towards God.

When sympathizing with Moses who was not permitted to enter the promised land she suggests that God is trying to show how much bigger He is than His subjects.

.....

"While God's adroiter will

On Moses seemed to fasten
In tantalizing play--
As Boy should deal
With lesser Boy
To show supremacy."³

Another time she accuses Him of "hyperbolic archness":

"God is a distant, stately Lover,
Woos, so He tells us, by His Son.

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 106 No. XLIX

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 63 No. CXVII

³ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 46

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

At first the doctor said:

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

The doctor said in a low voice to his assistant:

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

When the doctor said this, he was not permitted to enter

the room, and the doctor said to his assistant:

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

.....

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

"I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

I shall be with you, I shall be with you."

Surely a vicarious courtship!
Miles' and Priscilla's such a one.
But lest the soul, like fair Priscilla,
Choose the envoy and spurn the Groom,
Vouches, with hyperbolic archness,
Miles and John Alden
Are synonym."¹

The "supreme iniquity" for which she blames the Almighty is
set forth in this interesting bit of verse:

"'Heavenly Father,' take to thee
The supreme iniquity,
Fashioned by thy candid hand
In a moment contraband.
Though to trust us seem to us
More respectful-- 'we are dust.'
We apologize to Thee
For Thine own Duplicity."²

"Home is the definition of God", Emily wrote once to a
friend.³ Truly she found in her relationship with her Heavenly
Father that trust, intimacy, and freedom which is the foundation
of vital family life. Emily Dickinson was "at home" with her God.
"God, set solid in the white, unchanging background of eternity,
never failed her."⁴ No matter how keen her suffering or how acute
her deprivations the sense of comradeship with her Creator was ever

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 198

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 298 No. CII

³ Letter to Perez Cowan, "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson" by
M. D. Bianchi p. 275

⁴ Bradford, G. "Portraits of American Women" in the Atlantic Monthly
for August 1919 Vol. CXXIV P. 218

There is a certain...

When the...

But for the...

Those the...

However, with...

At the same...

And...

The...

and...

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present. Much of her appeal to us is due to her individual intimacy with a near and friendly, a natural rather than a supernatural God.

B. An Immanent Rather than a Transcendent God:

The God of Emily Dickinson, so closely allied with the natural, is as manifestly involved in the universe of nature as he is in the thoughts and emotions and opinions of her own person. God could not be as near to a life as Emily Dickinson finds Him to hers and at the same time be thought of as a Big Executive who with two or three commands set the earth going and then retired, satisfied. Such a near God, too, could not be conceived as a Creator whose glory, dignity, and power so transcended even the noblest things of earth that man could in no way or manner approach Him or understand His revelations through His world. Emily Dickinson's "near" God was an immanent God. His immanence was, for her, one of her Maker's most significant and observable characteristics. He does not transcend His world, but He is consciously, actively engaged in the continual process of creation in it. He is everywhere in His universe. He is everywhere, but not in the pantheistic sense of being identified with the objects of His creative activity. His omnipresence is, rather, the personal expression of His mind and spirit in the forming and fitting together of all the minute details of His great masterpiece.

Pringle-Pattison in his book, "The Idea of God" affirms that

"the nature of ultimate Reality is to be read in its manifestations, and may be read there truly.----- Man is organic to nature and nature is organic to man."¹ Emily Dickinson sensed these manifestations of the ultimately real and interpreted them as evidences of God's immanence. In an article which appeared in the Boston Transcript, William Stanley Braithwaite said of her, "she possessed an unostentatious conviction that creation is a reality which the Great Architect has built with crystal purposes and cemented with divine intentions," and "The plan of this reality was so transparent to her that she is alternately filled with pity and irony because humanity could not decipher it."²

Emily Dickinson associated God so closely with his universe that we can read hardly any of her nature poems without feeling their spiritual implications, without surmising that what Carlyle said in "Sartor Resartus", "Through every star, through every glass blade, and most through every living soul the glory of a present God still beams."³ was also a part of her creed.

Just how God affects the changes in His world and brings about its wonders and beauties, Emily Dickinson is at a loss to know, but that He is there working out His will, instilling into it His spirit is shown again and again in her poems. Here is one:

"The skies can't keep their secret!

They tell it to the hills--

The hills just tell the orchards--

And they the daffodils!

¹ Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God p.177

² Braithwaite, W.S.: "An Unexpected Legacy to American Literature from the Soul of a New England Woman" - Boston Evening Transcript

³ Quoted by Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God p.156, 157

A bird, by chance, that goes that way
Soft overheard the whole.
If I should bribe the little bird,
Who knows but she would tell?

I think I won't, however,
It's finer not to know;
If summer were an axiom,
What sorcery had snow?

So keep your secret, Father!
I would not, if I could,
Know what the sapphire fellows do,
In your new-fashioned world!" 1

In God's wise planning for the universe He made it full of beauty and loveliness without divulging His reasons for so doing. In the following lines, Emily Dickinson points out the "overtakelessness" 2 of beauty.

"Beauty is not caused,
It is.
Chase it and it ceases.
Chase it not and it abides.
Overtake the creases
In the meadow when
The Wind
Runs his fingers thro' it?
Deity will see to it
That you never do it." 3

1 Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 86 No. XVI

2 See Emily Dickinson's use of the word, "overtakelessness" of death: Complete Poems P. 293

3 Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 57

Irregularities in natural events she playfully ascribes to the Creator's inability to keep the correct time.

"Sunset at night is natural,
But sunset in the dawn
Reverses Nature, Master,
So midnight due at noon.

Eclipses be predicted
And Science bows them in,
But so one face us suddenly--
Jehovah's watch is wrong."¹

The coming of each season in its time is to her an event full of spiritual significance. God's gift of the spring is evidence of the validity of Jesus' answer, "Ye must be born again" when Nicodemus asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"An altered look about the hills;
A Tyrian light the village fills;
A wider sunrise in the dawn;
A deeper twilight on the lawn;
A print of a vermilion foot;
A purple finger on the slope;
A flippant fly upon the pane;
A spider at his trade again;

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 75

Irregularly as in nature, I would not say that it is
to the Director's fault in keeping the record time.
"Honest as night is natural."

But honest in the dawn
Honest as night, honest
Honest as night, honest

Honest as night, honest
Honest as night, honest
But no one can be honest--
Honest as night, honest.

The honesty of each record in the time is to be on your
bill of material honesty. The bill of the record is
evidence of the honesty of each record. The bill of the
record is honesty. The bill of the record is honesty.
Honest as night, honest

An honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;
A honest bill about the bill;

A honest bill about the bill;

Honest as night, honest
Honest as night, honest
Honest as night, honest

An added strut in chanticleer;
A flower expected everywhere;
An axe shrill singing in the woods;
Fern-odors on untravelled roads,--
All this, and more I cannot tell,
A furtive look you know as well,
And Nicodemus' mystery
Receives its annual reply." ¹

Summer was so rich in its expression and suggestion of eternal values that she seeks reverently to become a partaker of its everlasting spirit. Awed by the beauty and wonder of the warm, pleasant days she cries,

"Oh, sacrament of summer days,
Oh, last communion in the haze,
Permit a child to join,

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine!" ²

The function of the frost in autumn and the furtherance of God's plan in bringing one season to a close and ushering in another, is put quaintly in these lines:

"Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power.

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 80 No. IX

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 124 No. LXXVIII

The blond assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God."¹

Winter seems to her symbolic of the mystical grandeur, .
dignity and solemnity associated with "cathedral tunes" and
implies that sometimes there is an element of what Otto calls
the "mysterium tremendum"² or sense of awesomeness in her
religion. How easy it is to catch her mood when reading this:

"There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything,
'Tis the seal, despair,--
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath;
When it goes, 'tis like the distance
On the look of death." ³

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 122 No. LXXVI

² cf. Otto, R: The Idea of the Holy Pp. 12-13

³ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 125 No. LXXXII

The extractions given above epitomize Emily Dickinson's realization of spirituality in nature. In the continual growing function of creation she saw the work of an indwelling God. All the energy and life of the world of nature was to her an implication of the moving spirit of God.¹ The grandeur, the glory, the wisdom and the gentleness of the Creator are all expressed in his works. He is present in all the beauty of the seasons and "the symphony written in the milky way with stars for notes and rays of light for bars--all are of God."² The Creator's actual presence gives meaning to the universe. Emily Dickinson perceived this meaning because her soul was always responsive to the spiritual. Her Sister Sue wrote at the time of Emily's death in an article for the Springfield Republican: "To her life was rich, and all aglow with God and immortality. With no creed, no formulated faith, hardly knowing the names of dogmas, she walked this life with the gentleness and reverence of old saints, with the firm step of martyrs who sing while they suffer."³

Not only was Emily Dickinson sure of the actual presence of the Divine in the universe, but through his universe He revealed himself to his child in a personal way. We have already quoted the poem which shows her listening to God's "not long" sermon in the presence of the bobolink and other woodland friends.⁴ Her soul's communion with God through nature is expressed also in others of her poems.

1 cf. Rall: The Meaning of God. p 38-40

2 Newton F: My Idea of God - quotation from Landone, B. in an article called "My All God" p. 285

3 Quoted by M.D. Bianchi "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson"

4 cf. this paper p. 26

At times the sense of spiritual revelation seems almost overwhelming to Emily. At times the stupendousness of the world about her awed her beyond the power of words, beyond the possibility of giving utterance to a prayer. She felt God's presence and worshipped in silent subjection to the mastering emotion which throbbed within her because of her closeness to the Infinite. She says,

"My period had come for prayer,
No other art would do,
My tactics missed a rudiment;
Creator, was it you?

God grows above, so those who pray
Horizons must ascend,
And so I stood upon the North
To reach this curious Friend.

The silence condescended,
The Heavens paused for me,
But awed beyond my errand
I worshiped--did not pray!¹

This sense of awe is reflected again in the poem in which she is describing her reactions to some of the everyday happenings of nature and wondering why they are so vivid. She only knows that God is there and refers the question to the great Artist who fashioned all, herself included. She says it this way:

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 47

At times the sense of spiritual yearning is
overwhelming. At times the consciousness of the
world about him seems but beyond the power of words, beyond the
possibility of giving substance to a prayer. The life of the
soul is not satisfied in silent submission to the suffering
condition which surrounds it, but because of its closeness to

the Infinite, the soul

is restless and now and then

no other ear would be

My restless mind is restless

Unrest, who is it?

But what above, as these are

Unrest, what is it?

And so I seek from the world

To reach this quiet friend

The silence is answered

The answer is not far

but seen beyond by vision

I understand the rest

This sense of rest is not a rest in the body in which the
is something but something in the soul of the everyday moment
of nature and something in the soul of the soul. The only sense
that is there and which the soul of the soul is
the soul is all, the soul is all, the soul is all

I understand the rest of the soul

"The murmur of a bee

A witchcraft yieldeth me.

If any ask me why,

'Twere easier to die

Than tell.

The red upon the hill

Taketh away my will;

If anybody sneer,

Take care, for God is here,

That's all.

The breaking of the day

Addeth to my degree;

If any ask me how,

Artist, who drew me so,

Must tell!" 1

In the midst of the gorgeous pageantry of creation, Emily Dickinson distinguishes God, more royal than any of his works. 2. With remarkable facility she sums up in four short lines the whole doctrine of the divine immanence.

"Who has not found the heaven below

Will fail of it above.

God's residence is next to mine,

His furniture is love."

1. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 109, No. LIV
2. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 101, No. XLI, Poem beginning "Like mighty footlights burned the red."

"The murmur of a bee
A whisper of a breeze
If any ask me why,
'Twere easier to die
Than tell."

The red upon the hill
Takes away my will;
If anybody asks,
Take care, for God is here,
That's all."

The breaking of the day
Addeth to my degree;
If any ask me how,
Artist, who drew me so,
What tell!"

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With resolvable facility she sums up in four short lines the whole
doctrine of the divine immanence.

"Who has not found the heaven below
Will fall of it above.
God's residence is next to mine,
His furniture is love."

1. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 108, No. 151.
2. "Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" p. 101, No. 141.
- beginning "The nighty locusts burned the red."

To those who have eyes and hearts to see, God is near at hand. He dwells with men, in the same world, on the same street. Emily Dickinson found Him right next door to her. She implies in her last line "His furniture is love" that she finds God immanent not only in the world of nature but also in the lives of men. Through love and sympathy He aids men in the carrying out of His great purposes. As Sorley says, "the moral purpose of the world--is the purpose of a Supreme mind. Finite minds attain unity with supreme mind not by absorption of their individuality but by the perfecting of their character in cooperating with the divine purpose." ¹

Perfecting of character often involves suffering and hard labor. Even in adversity, however, God leads, and often through that adversity He carries out purposes which otherwise could not be achieved. Emily Dickinson gives expression to that thought in several poems. In one she affirms,

"Far from love the Heavenly Father
Leads the chosen child;
Oftener through realm of briar
Than the meadow mild,

Oftener by the claw of dragon
Than the hand of friend,
Guides the little one predestined
To the native land."²

¹ Sorley, W.R.: Moral Values and the Idea of God P. 467

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 251 No. CXXXVIII

The poem beginning,

"I can wade grief,
Whole pools of it,--"

carries the triumphant conclusion that

"Power is only pain,
Stranded, through discipline,
Till weights will hang.
Give balm to giants,
And they'll wilt, like men.
Give Himmaleh,--
They'll carry him!"¹

In seeking encouragement in the facing of her own trials she advises the one who shares her grief to look upon the lives of those who amid hardship tried manfully to carry out God's purpose. She says:

"Read then of faith
That shone above the fagot;
Clear strains of hymn
The river could not drown;
Brave names of men
And celestial women,
Passed out of record
Into renown!"²

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 21 No. XXXIV

² Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 13 No. XVIII

The poem continues.

"I am with you."

And the words of the

poet are the most beautiful that

any man has ever said.

Remember, through the ages,

that the words are true.

Give him the place.

And the world will know.

Give him the place.

That is the way.

In making arrangements in the future of the world

we should not forget the words of the poet.

Of those who will surely be with us in the

future. The words:

"I am with you."

And the words are true.

Give him the place.

And the world will know.

Give him the place.

That is the way.

And the world will know.

Give him the place.

1. The words of the poet are the most beautiful that

any man has ever said.

God's working through the medium of finite minds is expressed in Emily's poem on Publication where she declares that she would rather go, "White unto the White Creator" than invest her "snow". Man, Emily Dickinson insists here, thinks God's thoughts after Him.

"Thought belongs to Him who gave it--
Then to him who bear
Its corporeal illustration. Sell
The Royal air
In the parcel. Be the merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace,
But reduce no human spirit
To disgrace of price!"¹

That each life exists for some divine end, and that man is given the opportunity to **strive** for that end not only through his life on earth but in eternity, is given expressen in the following:

"Each life converges to some centre
Expressed or still;
Exists in every human nature
A goal,

Admitted scarcely to itself, it may be,
Too fair
For credibility's temerity
To dare.

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 4

It is not the purpose of this study to express
in any way a personal opinion on the subject of the
"Gospel of the Kingdom" as such, but to present
the facts as they are, and to show that the
Gospel of the Kingdom is a reality.

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"Adored with caution, as a brittle heaven,
To reach
Were hopeless as the rainbow's raiment
To touch,
Yet persevered toward, surer for the distance;
How high
Unto the saints' slow diligence
The sky!

Ungained, it may be, by a life's low venture,
But then,
Eternity enables the endeavoring
Again."¹

Emily Dickinson felt sure that God was striving to carry out His will through His intimacy with the heart and mind of man, but she also implies that man must strive to be true to the spirit of the Eternal which is within him or he will refute and make impossible God's plan for his life. This thought she expresses in these words:

"I should not dare to be so sad
So many years again.
A load is first impossible
When we have put it down.

The Superhuman then withdraws,
And we who never saw
The Giant at the other side
Begin to perish now."²

¹ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 34 No. LXI

² Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 132

Admitted with reason, as a matter of fact,

To reach

Were together as the subject's friend

To reach

Yet recovered again, never for the distance

For this

Also the subject's own difference

The story

Admitted, it may be, as a little too far

But then

Eventually reaches the conclusion

Again, it

Belly Whitman told me that she was invited to carry out
his will through the testimony which she gave and which was
not the first time that she was asked to do so. This was the
first of the several times in which she was asked to do so.
and she testified that she was not able to do so. This is the
evidence in these cases:

"I should not have to be asked

to carry out his will

A fact is that impossible

When we have got it done

The Government then withdrew

And we who never saw

The thing as the other side

begin to testify now."

I therefore turn to the testimony of the Government
and the testimony of the subject's friend

"The Superhuman" - God, like man, working through man, but greater than men, meant added power to Emily Dickinson. That she found Him immanent in all of life has been indicated by the foregoing quotations from her poetry. Her "Lord," "Creator," "Maker," "Great Spirit," "Artist," "Superhuman" God¹ is a living, real Deity who carries on the work of Creation in the world of nature, who brings about His purposes through the medium of humans who listen to His voice, and who instills His spirit into all the universe.

C. A God Revealed through Love rather than through Law:

Emily Dickinson's God was natural, and immanent, but of greater importance to her personally was the fact that she found Him a God of love rather than a God of law. Liberty and freedom were two of her most cherished principles. She could not offer allegiance to any God other than one whose guidance was accomplished through love rather than through law. "Thou shalt not" seemed to have no place in her religion even if at times it appeared necessary in her life.² Exactions made by the "Father and the Son", as explained to her in terms of "inference appalling," seemed to influence her only in its tendency to cause her irritation. The probabilities and uncertainties and arguments of belief irked her. She writes:

"Who were "the Father and the Son"--

We pondered when a child,

And what had they to do with us--

And when portentous told

¹ cf. this paper p 72

² See poem on Renunciation: Further Poems P. 167

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"Who were 'the Father and the Son'--

We pondered when a child,

and what had they to do with us--

and when portentious told

With inference appalling,
By Childhood fortified,
We thought, 'at least they are no worse
Than they have been described.'

Who are 'the Father and the Son'--
Did we demand today,
'The Father and the Son' himself
Would doubtless specify,
But had they the felicity
When we desired to know,
We better Friends had been, perhaps,
Than time ensue to be.

We start, to learn that we believe
But once, entirely--
Belief, it doe^w not fit so well
When altered frequently.

We blush, that Heaven if we achieve,
Event ineffable--

We shall have shunned, until ashamed
To own the Miracle."¹

The laws and observances which well-meaning Puritan preachers gave forth as the decrees of God, and which they declared would have to be obeyed if one wished for "life beyond", were not taken very seriously by Emily. She found the idea of restriction, even when it was sanctified by calling it "God's will" absolutely abhorrent to her. Her free spirit was to be curbed not even

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 302 No. CXI

With inference appealing,
By Childhood fortified,
We thought, 'at least they are no worse
Than they have been described.'

Who are 'the Father and the Son'--
Did we demand today,

'The Father and the Son' himself
Would doubtless specify,

But had they the felicity
When we desired to know,

We better friends had been, perhaps,
Than time came to be.

We start, to learn that we believe
But once, entirely--

Belief, it does not fit so well
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ly abhorrent to her. Her free spirit was to be curbed not even

by a God's strict will. She felt that her Creator ruled not by law, but revealed his purpose in loving cooperation with humanity. "God is Love" was a part of her creed. The following four lines on love seem to identify it with the Creator, for He alone is anterior to all of life and He causes the continuance of life after death.

"Love is anterior to life,

Posterior to death,

Initial of creation, and

The exponent of breath"¹

A perusal of those poems of Emily Dickinson's which deal with the subject of God's will expressed in love, seems to indicate that she recognized several different ways in which that love is being shown. God's love, she thought, is expressed through:

1. The nature of man
2. God's willingness to accept the intent as well as the deed
3. His comradeship and Fatherhood
4. His gift of immortality

In the first place God reveals His love in the way in which He fashioned man, himself. He made him "a little lower than the angels" and supplied him with abilities and capacities which enable him to accomplish much and to dare much if he will. The sense of the worthfulness of man's personality is seen in this poem of Emily Dickinson's:

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 167 No. XXXVII

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 sense of the worthiness of man's personality is seen in this
 poem of Emily Dickinson's:

"To be alive is power

Existence in itself,
Without a further function,
Omnipotence enough.

To be alive and Will--

'T is able as a God!

The Further of ourselves be what--

Such being Finitude?"¹

In another place she implies that God made man true to plan, "in His own image," that God endowed man with capacities for nobility and kingship, and that man himself is at fault if he does not realize the achievements of which God has made him capable. She says:

"We never know how high we are

Till we are called to rise;

And then, if we are true to plan,

Our statures touch the skies.

The heroism we recite

Would be a daily thing,

Did not ourselves the cubits warp

For fear to be a king."²

Emily Dickinson found another indication of God's love in her belief that He was willing to accept the intentions and purposes of man's heart whether or not those desires ever eventuated in deeds. A thought may never be expressed in an action which can be observed by general eyes, but God knows its

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 259 No. IX

² The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 53 No. XCVII

"To be alive is power

Existence in itself,

Without a further function,

Omnipotence enough.

To be alive and will--

It is able as a God!

The further of ourselves be what--

Such being finished?"

In another place she implies that God made man true to plan,
"in His own image," that God endowed man with capacities for
nobility and kingship, and that man himself is at fault if he
does not realize the achievements of which God has made him
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"We never know how high we are

Till we are called to rise;

And then, if we are true to plan,

Our stature touch the skies.

The heroism we realize

Would be a daily thing,

Did not ourselves the evils warp

For fear to be a king."

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action which can be observed by general eyes, but God knows its

significance.

"A deed knocks first at thought,
And then it knocks at will.
That is the manufacturing spot,
And will at home and well.

It then goes out an act,
Or is entombed so still
That only to the ear of God
Its doom is audible."¹

When the final questionings come as to the worth of man's tasks during life, our poet declares that man's unfulfilled aspirations will count for much. She feels certain that:

"Not what we did shall be the test
When act and will are done,
But what our Lord infers we would--
Had we diviner been."²

More vividly than through a realization of the nature God gave to man, or through a belief in His willingness to accept the intention for the deed, God reveals His love by His companionship and fatherliness. With Him at one's side, there need be no fear. As Emily Dickinson says,

"Suffice us, for a crowd,
Ourselves--and rectitude--
And that companion
Not far off
From furthest good man--
God."³

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 37 No. LXVII

² Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 193

³ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 193

significance.

"A deed knocks first at thought,
And then it knocks at will.
That is the manufacturing spot,
And will at home and well.

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Or is entombed so still
That only to the ear of God
Its boom is audible."

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"Suffice us, for a crowd,

Ourselves--and rectitude--

And that companion

Not far off

From furthest good man--

God."

To her, God was a personal being of goodwill and love who drew near to man to help and encourage him. Of his concern for every human soul she writes,

"Not one by Heaven defrauded stay,
Although He seem to steal,
He restitutes in some sweet way.
Secreted in His will."¹

Even through lives which seem to be deleterious rather than progressive, God strives to bring about the good. As Pringle-Pattison says, "This is the real omnipotence of atoning love, unweariedly creating good out of evil; and it is no far-off theological mystery, but, God be thanked the very texture of our human experience."² Making the most of hardships with the assurance of her Father's help is a note sounded often in Emily Dickinson's writings. Time and again she sought to prove the truth of her own statement,

"How excellent the heaven,
When earth cannot be had;
How hospitable, then, the face
Of our old neighbor, God!"³

When in the midst of grief she can "dimly recollect a Grace", called God, who is,

"Renowned to ease extremity
When formula had failed"--⁴

She must have found relief by coming to Him with the words,

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 290 No. LXXXIII

² Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God P. 417

³ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 197 No. XXXII

⁴ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 188

"Father, I bring thee not myself,--

That were the little load;

I bring thee the imperial heart

I had not strength to hold.

The heart I cherished in my own

Till mine too heavy grew,

Yet strangest, heavier since it went,

Is it too large for you?" ¹

Only a God of love could be appealed to in such terms. One of Emily Dickinson's most quoted poems contains further implications of her belief in a Father God who loves His children even when He seems to take away the things or persons they most desire. She says,

"I never lost as much but twice,

And that was in the sod;

Twice have I stood a beggar

Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,

Reimbursed my store.

Burglar, banker, father,

I am poor once more!"²

At the door of God she stands, confident that she shall receive enrichment. Her God, although a "burglar" who could take away, was a "banker" too, and the Possessor of vast and everlasting wealth. More than this, He was her "father" who loved her.

¹ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 172 No. XLVIII
cf. also Complete Poems, P. 203 "At Least to Pray is Left" and
Further Poems P. 188 "Savior, I've no one else to tell"

² The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 201 No. XL

"Father, I bring thee not myself,--

That were the little load;

I bring thee the imperial heart

I had not strength to hold.

The heart I cherished in my own

Till mine too heavy grew,

Yet strongest, heavier since it went,

Is it too large for you?" I

Only a God of love could be appealed to in such terms. One of

Emily Dickinson's most quoted poems concerns further implica-

tions of her belief in a Father God who loves his children even

when he seems to take away the things or persons they most

desire. She says,

"I never loved as much but twice,

And that was in the end;

Twice have I stood a beggar

Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,

Reimbursed my store.

Butler, banker, father,

I am poor once more!"

At the door of God she stands, confident that she shall receive

enrichment. Her God, although a "butler" who could take away,

was a "banker" too, and the possessor of vast and everlasting

wealth. More than this, he was her "father" who loved her.

1 The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 172 No. XLVIII
of also Complete Poems, P. 203 "At least to pray is left" and
Further Poems P. 188 "Savior, I've no one else to tell"

2 The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 201 No. XL

Because He loved her, she was certain that he would be willing to give again of His abundance to relieve her poverty. Her conception of God as comrade and Father is one of the most appealing characteristics of her religious attitude.

A subject upon which Emily Dickinson has much to say, and one which is a further indication of her belief in a loving God is her unshakable assurance of immortality. In certain terms she states the fact that:

"This world is not conclusion;

A sequel stands beyond,

Invisible, as music,

But positive, as sound.

It beckons and it baffles;

Philosophies don't know,

And through a riddle, at the last,

Sagacity must go.

To guess it puzzles scholars;

To gain it, men have shown

Contempt of generations,

And crucifixion known.¹

Her poems upon death and related themes fill seventy-two pages in the volume of "Complete Poems," and there are many more in the "Further Poems". Her life is a testimony to Clement Wood's statements in regard to the poet souls who are hunting through their verse for heaven. "Heaven is," he says, "the vision of fulfilled desire",² and, "It is not out of tranquility but out

¹ "The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 226 No. LXXXIII

² Wood, C: "Hunters of Heaven" P. 1

Because he loved her, she was certain that he would be willing
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 fulfilled desire," and, "it is not out of tranquillity but out

I "The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" P. 226 No. LXXXIII
 S Wood, C: "Hunters of Heaven" P. 1

of lack, that the poet sings."¹ Those values which she failed to realize here she was confident of attaining there.² The anticipation of death and life after death was not fearsome to her for she believed in the everlasting quality of spirit. She states this assurance simply,

"Death is a dialogue between

The spirit and the dust.

'Dissolve,' says Death. The Spirit, 'Sir,
I have another trust.'

Death doubts it, argues from the ground.

The Spirit turns away,

Just laying off, for evidence,

An overcoat of clay."³

She writes of the prevailing attitude of sorrow caused by death,

"If tolling bell I ask the cause.

'A soul has gone to God,'

I'm answered in a lonesome tone;

Is heaven then so sad?

That bells should joyful ring to tell

A soul had gone to heaven,

Would seem to me the proper way

A good news should be given."⁴

She wrote very few poems on the purpose or mission of Christ, but there are two which so beautifully express the feeling that through God's love he was sent to show mortals the way,

¹ Wood, C: "Hunters of Heaven" P. 42

² cf. Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 200 No. XXXIX, P. 152
No. XIII, P. 191, XXI P. 146 No. V, etc.

³ Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 196. No. XXXI

⁴ The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 244 No. CXXV

of fact, that the poet sings, "Those values which she failed
 to realize here she was confident of attaining there." The
 anticipation of death and life after death was not foreign to her
 for she believed in the everlasting quality of spirit. She
 makes this assurance simply.

"Death is a dialogue between
 The spirit and the dust.
 'Passive,' says Death. The Spirit, 'Sir,
 I have another trust.'

Death doubts it, argues from the ground.
 The Spirit turns away,
 Just laying off, for evidence,
 An overcoat of clay."³

The writer of the prevailing attitude of sorrow caused by
 death.

"If tolling bell I ask the cause.
 'A soul has gone to God.'
 I'm answered in a joyous tone;
 Is heaven then no sad?

That bells should joyful ring to tell
 A soul had gone to heaven,
 Would seem to me the proper way
 A good news should be given."⁴

She wrote very few poems on the purpose or mission of Christ,
 but there are two which so beautifully express the feeling
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1 Wood, G.: "Hunters of Heaven" p. 42
 2 The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson p. 200 No. XXIX, p. 152
 No. XIII, p. 151, XXI, p. 148 No. V, etc.
 3 Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson p. 198, No. XXI
 4 The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson p. 244 No. CXXV

that I quote them here,

"Life is what we make it,
Death we do not know;
Christ's acquaintance with him
Justifies him, though.

All the other distance
He hath traversed first,
No new mile remaineth
Far as Paradise.

His sure feet preceding,
Tender Pioneer--
Base must be the cowards
Dare not venture now."¹

and

"Unto Me?'
'I do not know you--
Where may be your house?'

'I am Jesus--late of
Judea,
Now of Paradise.'

'Wagons have you, to
Convey me?
This is far from thence'--

'Arms of mine sufficient
Phaeton,
Trust Omnipotence.'

¹ Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 106

Trust Omnipotence.

Instant,

'arms of mine sufficient

This is far from chance'--

Convey me?

'Kegons have you, to

How of Paradise.

Jude,

'I am Jesus--late of

'There may be your house?

'If do not know you--

"Uncle May?

and

have not venture now."

Base must be the coward's

Tender Pioneer--

His sure feet preceding.

Far as Paradise.

No new mile remaneth

He hath traversed first.

All the other distance

Justified him, though.

Christ's acquaintance with him

Death we do not know;

'Life is what we make it,

that I quote from here.

'I am spotted.'

'I am Pardon.'

'I am small.'

'The least

Is esteemed in Heaven

The chiefest.

Occupy my house.' " 1

Whatever the trials or the happiness of her life, Emily was sure that at its close God would,

"--lift his little girl,--

Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,--

Over the stile of pearl!"²

Emily Dickinson's "Curious Friend," "Old Neighbor," "Burglar, Banker, Father,"³ God of love, expressing His affection for His children in the various ways we have indicated seems to be a Deity worthy of her reverence. This chapter's study of her poetry has endeavored to show that in her writing she has professed her belief in a God who is natural, immanent, and revealed through the medium of love.

1. Further Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 49

2. Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson P. 90 for other poems on immortality see P. 28, No. XLIX p. 234 No. CII P. 239 No. CXV P. 249, No. CXXXIV

3. cf. this paper, p. 43

'I am spotted.'

'I am spotted.'

'I am small.'

'The least'

is esteemed in Heaven

The smallest.

Quench my power, 'I

Whichever she finds on the happiness of her life, Emily was sure

that at its close God would,

--"With his little girl,--"

Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,--

Over the side of pearl!"

Emily Dickinson's "Curious Friend," "Old Neighbor," "Angler,"

father, mother, & God of love, expressing his affection for his

children in the various ways we have indicated seems to be a fairly

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belief in a God who is natural, imminent, and revealed through the

medium of love.

1. Further poems of Emily Dickinson F. 43

2. Complete poems of Emily Dickinson F. 50 for other poems on
immortality see F. 55, No. XLIX p. 534 No. CII F. 535
No. CXXV p. 549, No. CXXIV

3. Cf. this paper, p. 43

Chapter IV: Summary and Evaluation of Emily Dickinson's Religion

a. The Protestant Quality:

The study of Emily Dickinson's religion is of especial interest to me, for we see in her conception of God those elements which modern religious leaders are emphasizing today. We have seen that there was very little in Emily Dickinson's life or early training which accounted for her religious beliefs. Her religious beliefs were the result of her individuality, and her religious beliefs were the result of her own search for truth.

PART III: EVALUATION OF EMILY DICKINSON'S RELIGION AS REVEALED IN HER POETRY

Her religion was the result of her own search for truth. She broke away from the Calvinistic emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God, the originality of sin in man's nature, and the duty of repentance through strict and plain observance of religious laws. Her was the God of the Transcendentalists satisfactory to her, although their objection to form, their doctrine of the freedom of the soul, of the spirituality of man, and of the vitality of the invisible are more in tune with her spirit, and therefore she was more in tune with their spirit, and therefore she was more in tune with their spirit, and therefore she was more in tune with their spirit.

The Puritan legacy was too severe and restrictive for her. The Puritan legacy was too severe and restrictive for her. The Puritan legacy was too severe and restrictive for her.

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PART III: EVALUATION OF EMILY NICKINSON'S
RELIGION AS REVEALED IN HER POETRY

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Chapter IV: Summary and Evaluation of Emily Dickinson's Religion

A. Its Prophetic Quality.

The study of Emily Dickinson's religion is of especial interest to us, for we see in her conception of God those elements which modern religious leaders are emphasizing today. We have seen that there was very little in Emily Dickinson's life or early training which accounted for her religious liberty. The freedom of her own spirit with its individuality, optimism, love of nature, and simplicity caused her to denounce the strict religion of her fathers. She broke away from the Calvinistic emphasis on the autocratic sovereignty of God, the originality of sin in man's nature, and the duty of repentance through strict and pious observance of religious laws. Nor was the God of the transcendentalists satisfactory to her. Although their objection to form, their doctrine of the freedom of the soul, of the spirituality of man, and of the reality of the invisible are more in tune with her spirit, she rebelled against the vagueness of their supernatural discussions and their ascetic practices.

The Puritan Almighty was too severe and exacting a Taskmaster to be considered by Emily Dickinson as the Great

Principle behind the universe. The God of the transcendentalists was too vaguely represented. The God in whom she believed, and who, she was confident, believed in her, was a natural rather than a supernatural God, a God immanent in his universe rather than transcending it, a God who governed his world and made his will known to men through the medium of love rather than through exacting and rigid laws. This God whom she could love and honor because he appealed to the highest impulses of her own mind and soul, was so like our noblest modern conception of Him that it is easy for us to forget that her attitude was almost heretical in a day when Puritan doctrine held sway. Her poetry is prophetic of the religious spirit of our age. One is amazed to see how far ahead of her own world she lived, how far ahead she was even of many of the religious beliefs of today. She is an exponent of the rather modern emphasis upon personal experience as the true criterion for the validity of religion. Her poetry sounds a prophetic note in regard to the feeling today that religion is not a following of set creeds but a living of a noble life. She emphasizes too the current idea of God as a great Superhuman who creates and conserves all the enduring spiritual values in human life and leads men on through ^olove to greater and greater achievements.

Principle behind the universe. The God of the transcendentalists was too vaguely represented. The God in whom the religious, and who, and was confident, believed in him, was a natural rather than a supernatural God, a God incarnate in his universe rather than transcending it, a God who governed his world and made his will known to it through the medium of love rather than through exacting and rigid laws. This is the attitude of her own mind and soul, and she is so conscious of the suggestion of this that it is very far from being that her attitude was almost nihilistic in a day when religious doctrine held sway. Her poetry is prophetic of the attitude of her own world and mind, and she is aware of how far ahead of her own world she lived, how far ahead she was even of many of the religious beliefs of today. This is an exponent of the modern secular spirit upon personal experience as the true criterion for the validity of religion. Her poetry sounds a prophetic note in regard to the feeling today that religion is not a following of set customs but a living of a noble life. The emphasis and the current idea of God as a great Superhuman who creates and governs all the ordering spiritual values in human life and leads men on through love to greater and greater realization.

These intuitive beliefs of Emily Dickinson's are emphasized again and again by leaders of the newer faith. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick in his book, "Adventurous Religion", sets forth many of the ideas to which she gives expression. He believes that man's discovery of spiritual values in his own life and the lives of his fellow men is the central point of religious thinking. The function of religion is to beautify, purify, and conserve these religious values, and to unify the inward life of man. He says, "Religion at its best has supplied-and it can now supply-the motives, faiths, insights, hopes, convictions by which men inwardly come to terms with themselves, gain spiritual ascendancy over their baser elements, achieve peace and power, and come off more than conquerors. Religion means the achievement of such a view of life, its source, its meaning, its destiny, such personal relationship, moreover, with the Spirit from whom our spirits come, in such fellowship with ourselves, with other people, and with God as will furnish inward spiritual dynamic for radiant and triumphant living." 1.

Fosdick also gives us an insight into the religious beliefs of the youth of today, beliefs which strangely accord with Emily Dickinson's feeling about religion. He says of youth

1. Fosdick, H. E.: "Adventurous Religion", pp. 26, 27.

that "it refuses to accept the old formulations or to be reverent toward the old churches. It wants the life, but it will not accept it phrased in theologies that insult intelligence and in institutions that advertise in every distinctive emphasis of their denominational peculiarities that they are alien from this generation's real problems and real needs." 1.

I have quoted Harry Emerson Fosdick as an example, but there are many others who ought to be listed as exponents of these same modern tendencies. Prominent among these are such religious leaders as Dean Inge, Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, and E. Stanley Jones. 2.

Probably much of the loneliness characterizing Emily Dickinson's life was due to her ultra-modernity. Forerunners, however, are often lonely. It seems to be their lot to set forth truth as they find it in their own lives in spite of restraining influences and lack of understanding. It is to such souls that civilization owes its progress. Without the daring leaders, the new could never be introduced. God's truth is always assuming higher and higher forms according as man becomes able to perceive it. To those whose insight is keener than the rest, whose ability to perceive is more

1. Fosdick, H. E. "Adventurous Religion", p. 291.

2. cf. Fosdick: "The Manhood of the Master"
Inge: "Truth and Falseness in Religion"
Cadman: "Christ of God" "Ambassadors of God"
Jones: "The Christ of the Indian Road" "The Christ of Every Road"

...is referred to as the "old" religion of the
...and the "new" religion of the future.
...and the "new" religion of the future.
...and the "new" religion of the future.

I have quoted Henry George's words as an example,
but there are many others who ought to be taken as examples
of those who are modern and scientific. Treatment of these
such religious leaders as John Jones, Dr. G. Thomas Jones,
and J. Benjamin Jones.

Probably much of the loneliness characteristic of
Buddhist's life was due to his ultra-modernism. For example,
modern, and often lonely. It seems to be their lot to be
lonely when we say that it is their lot to be lonely.
...and lack of understanding. It is in
such souls that civilization over the progress. Without
...the new could never be introduced. But
...is always assuming higher and higher forms and
...is able to perceive it. To those who imagine
...than the rest, whose ability to perceive is more

1. Buddhist, H. H. "Advancement Religion", p. 221.

2. "The World of the Future"

3. "The World of the Future"

4. "The World of the Future"

5. "The World of the Future"

acute, the world owes its development.

The prophetic quality in the religion of Emily Dickinson commends her to us as a helpful guide in our search for greater spiritual satisfaction. As a preacher who knew her once wrote, "If her genius was inspiration, it was something to which every soul that is human has a claim, in some humble degree, to share; and the way in which she lived deserved study for the light it may throw upon what mankind can do to come into its own share of the same gift." 1.

B: Its Essential Dynamic--A Valid Idea of God.

Emily Dickinson's poetry and life are helpful to us in the attainment of freer spirituality because she portrays a God who is valid, and satisfying for human worship and fellowship. Without this valid conception of the Great Purposer behind the universe, a study of her utterances on religion in the interest of spiritual development would be in vain. The validity of her conception of God is the essential dynamic of her religious poetry.

As was intimated in the introduction to this paper, man to-day is seeking, certainly as earnestly and perhaps to a fuller extent than he has in the past, for a conception of God which is in accord with the advances he has made in other fields than that of religion. He is a seeker after

1. Quoted by Bianchi, M. D. in "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson", p. 95.

...the world over its development.
...the religious quality in the religion of daily
...distinction between the two is as a helpful guide in our
...search for greater spiritual satisfaction. As a preserver
...who knew how to use it, "it was religion was its strength."
...it was something to which every soul that is human has a
...claim, to which human nature, in its own way, is drawn
...and which, however, only the light of the spirit can
...bring working out to some form of the one and the same
...thing."

...for the spiritual world - a world of God.
...the religious quality in the religion of daily
...in the attainment of that spiritual life and peace
...and the two are valid, and satisfying for each, in its own
...relationship. Without this valid recognition of the two
...responses behind the religious, a study of the religious in
...relation to the attainment of spiritual life and peace would be
...in vain. The validity of the religious of God is the
...foundation of the religious of man.

...as we are interested in the introduction to this book,
...the religious is something, certainly as religious and religious in
...a religious sense than we are in the world. For a religious
...of God which is in accord with the religious in man and
...in other fields than that of religion. It is a religious after

religious truth. Emily Dickinson says of truth:

"Truth is as old as God,
His twin identity-
And will endure as long as He,
A co-eternity." 1.

In the discovery of a valid idea of God spiritual truth ought to be self-evident. At the heart of, and in the background of her religious poetry lies this realization of a God who has power to reveal truth and to bring peace to man's mind and heart.

Few men today care to look upon God as a King or a Judge on a throne dictating orders to his universe. Many would like to think of him rather as the kind, fatherly God whom Emily Dickinson pictures. The human characteristics which she ascribes to Him are very appealing. Once she wrote in a letter to a friend, "To be human is more than to be divine, for when Christ was divine he was uncontented till he had been human." 2. Men would like to think of God in friendly terms, ^{as} an "Old Neighbor" who lives next door, and "whose furniture is love." The God of Emily Dickinson, "the God she made in her own image-'burglar, banker, father'- is the most intimate and irresistible democrat who has ever come down with Christendom." 3. A God so irresistible must have

1. Quoted from a letter to Dr. and Mrs. Holland by Mrs. Bianchi in "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," p. 188.

2. Quoted from a letter to Col. Higginson by Mrs. Bianchi in "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson," p. 305.

3. Kreymborg, A.: "Our Singing Strength," p. 194.

...the ... of ...

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In the discovery of a valid idea of the spiritual world
... is the result of, and in the
... of his religious faith this realization
of a God who has power to reward and to punish
... and a mind and heart.

... and today ... to look upon God as a King ...
... as a ... to his ...
... to ... as ...
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some claims to reality or he could not make such an appeal to human hearts. This belief in a Father-God expressing himself through love appeals to us in the same way in which it did to Emily Dickinson. Can we not, like her, trust the promptings of our own nature?

That God is friendly and loving is no indication that he does not at times cause his children to suffer hardship. A valid idea of God must be one which takes this into both account and believes that he loves even while he permits suffering and that suffering in itself may be an indication of his love. That Emily Dickinson so conceived God has already been shown, and this is only another emphasis in her poetry that leads us to consider her idea of God to be valid.

Her enthusiasm for immortality also heightens the validity of her conception. Sometimes, to be sure, her delight in earthly pleasures somewhat overshadowed her anticipation of the life after death, for instance, she once wrote: "The charms of the heaven in the bush are superseded, I fear, by the heaven in the hand, occasionally." 1. In more solemn moments, however, as has been shown through the poems quoted in the last chapter, immortality seemed a necessity. A God to whom we can give our whole-hearted

1. Quoted from a letter to Mrs. Samuel Bowles by Bianchi, M. D. in "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson", p. 203.

some things to reality or we would not make them an appeal
to human hearts. This belief is a Father-God expressing
himself through love appeals to us in the same way in which
it is to fully distinguish. Can we not, like him, trust the
promises of our own hearts?

That God is friendly and loving is no indication that
he does not at times cause his children to suffer hardship.
A valley idea of God must be one which takes him into
account and believes that he loves even when he permits
suffering and that suffering in itself may be an indication
of his love. That fully distinguish as conceived God was
already born again, and this is only another way of
saying that love is to be understood as love of God to be
valid.

But sometimes for immortality and happiness the
validity of our conception, ourselves, to be sure, but
believe in reality, however somewhat overestimated, has
indication of the life after death. For instance,
and more noted: "The church of the future in the past and
imperfect, I fear, by the power in the hand, occasionally."
In some ancient records, however, as has been shown through
the power quoted in the last chapter, immortality seemed a
necessity. A God to whom we give our whole-hearted

1. Quoted from a letter to Mrs. Samuel Butler by himself, A. D.
in "The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson", p. 253.

allegiance, if He be the Author of our life, ~~He~~ must be the Possessor of the means for the conserving of that life. We cannot be content with an idea of a God who offers us so many opportunities in this life and then ends it all in nothingness. A valid conception of God must include a belief in an immortality for the attainment of greater purposes and higher values.

We admire Emily Dickinson because she gives us a glimpse of what God can and should mean to mankind.

C. Its Growing Influence.

The prophetic quality of Emily Dickinson's verse and the satisfactory idea of God that it contains are making wider and wider appeal. Today, a hundred years after her birth, the world is beginning to realize the wondrous insight into the meaning of life and religion which was hers. She is being sought by admirers of the unusual, the brilliant, and the imaginative ^{in poetry} and is being praised by men in the literary field; but the greatest appeal of her poetry is due to her remarkable interpretation of the nature of man and God. In the introduction to "The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson" her niece says, "She is supremely the poet of those who 'never read poetry.' The scoffers, the literary agnostics make exception for her. She is also the poet of the unpoetic, the unlearned foreigner, the busy, practical

existence, if he is the author of our life, he must be the
possessor of the power for the preserving of our life. He
cannot be content with the idea of a God who offers us an empty
of existence in this life and later God. It is in contradiction
a valid conception of God must include a belief in an
immortality for the attainment of greater purposes and higher
values.

We agree with Dickinson because she gives us a glimpse
of what God can and should mean to mankind.

3. The Greater Influence.

The prophetic quality of Emily Dickinson's verse and

the sacrificial idea of God that it contains are making

higher and wider appeal. Today, a hundred years after her birth,

the world is beginning to realize the wonderful influence of her

the meaning of life and religion which was hers. She is

being sought by admirers of the unusual, the brilliant, and

the imaginative, and is being praised by men in the literary

field, for the greatest appeal of her poetry is to the heart.

Her influence is the influence of the master of art and God.

In the introduction to "The Complete Poems of Emily

Dickinson" her niece says, "She is supremely the poet of

those who 'never read poetry.' The scholar, the literary

critic take exception for her. One is sure the poet of

the unpoetic, the unlearned, the unlettered, the unpoetical

inexpressive man as well as woman, the wise young and groping old, the nature worshipper, the school girl, children caught by her fairy lineage, and lovers of all degree.

"Full many a preacher has found her line at the heart of his matter and left her verse to fly up with his conclusion. And it is the very Reverend head of a most Catholic order who writes, 'I bless God for Emily, -some of her writings have had a more profound influence on my life than anything else that any one has ever written.' " 1.

That we ought to "bless God for Emily" is becoming more and more apparent. That she is arousing more and more interest is evident from the increasing number of books and magazines which contain articles about her. The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, The Outlook, The Nation, The Catholic World, and The Bookman are among the periodicals which have devoted some of their pages to her within the past few years. Among the recent books, "Hunters of Heaven" by Clement Wood makes mention of her poetry, and Alfred Kreyborg in "Our Singing Strength" has a chapter

1. Bianchi, M. D. Introduction to "The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson", p. 1x.
2. cf. The Atlantic Monthly, June 1927
Harper's, March 1930
The Outlook, June 10, 1925
The Nation, June 29, 1927
The Catholic World, December 1924
The Bookman, November 1924

investigative was as well as some, the also four and
existing old, the nation woman, the school girl,
children caught by her fairy dress, and lovers of
degrees.
"I'll say a prayer for you, and I'll say a prayer
at his master and left her verse to fly up with his
accompaniment. And it is the very fervent need of a soul
Catholic order and writer, 'I bless God for you, -
her writings have had a more profound influence on my life
than any other I have ever read.'"
That we ought to "bless God for you" is something
more and more apparent. That she is something more and
more apparent is evident from the increasing number of
books and magazines which contain articles about her.
The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, The Outlook, The Nation,
The Catholic World, and The Bookman are among the
periodicals which have devoted some of their pages to her
within the past few years. Among the recent books, "Poems
of Heaven" by Vincent Wood makes mention of her poetry,
and Alfred Freyberg in "Our Living Heritage" has a chapter

1. Bennett, M. D. Introduction to "The Complete Poems of
Emily Dickinson", p. ix.
2. The Atlantic Monthly, June 1927
Harper's, March 1928
The Outlook, June 10, 1928
The Nation, June 22, 1927
The Catholic World, December 1924
The Bookman, November 1924

about her which he entitles, "The Tippler Leaning against the Sun." A new biography of her has just appeared, the only one since Mrs. Bianchi's "Life and Letters." It treats of the human background of her poetry in the hope that greater understanding of this New England poet may be the result. 1.

Such popularity must certainly be deserved. Her timid question to Col. Higginson concerning her work, "Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is alive?" is being answered by the awakening interest of people everywhere. 2. A greater appreciation of her works is imminent. Emily Dickinson is coming into her own. We of today doubt not that her poetry will live, for it has an appeal that is universal. We can say of her the words spoken of La Duse, to whom she has been compared, "She chimed on all the silver bells of truth and beauty in the human heart." 3

1. Pollitt, J. "Emily Dickinson, The Human Background of Her Poetry."
2. Quoted by Bianchi, M. D. in the "Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson", p. 338.
3. Quoted by Pollitt, J. from an article in the New York Evening Post for April 21, 1924. cf. "Emily Dickinson, The Human Background of Her Poetry," p. 347.

about her which he entitled, "The forgotten woman against the law."

A new biography of her has just appeared, the only one since the

biography "Life and Letters." It treats of the woman's personality

of her poetry in the hope that greater understanding of this new

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Such biography must certainly be desired. Her kind question

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work is imminent. Emily Dickinson is coming into her own. So

of course does not mean her poetry will live, for it has an appeal

that is universal. We can say of her one word spoken at the time,

to show she has been forgotten, "she chimed on all the silver bells

of truth and beauty in the human heart."

1. Vol. 1, "Emily Dickinson, The Human Background of Her Poetry,"

2. Edited by Daniel G. B. in the "Life and Letters of Emily

Dickinson," p. 122.

3. Quoted by Vol. 1, from an article in the New York Evening

Post for April 21, 1924, of "Emily Dickinson, The Human

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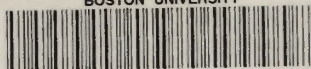
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